

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
HB 702 - Health Care Facilities - Nursing Homes - Acquisitions and Licensure
Position: Favorable

Chair Pena-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullison,

The Alzheimer's Association – representing the over 110,000 Marylanders with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, along with their caregivers – is here today in strong support of House Bill 702, which requires the Maryland Health Care Commission to provide certain information regarding the acquisition of a nursing home to the Office of Health Care Quality; and requires the Secretary of Health to consider the information before acting regarding licensure to operate a nursing home.

This committee, in Chapter 160 of 2021, worked to increase inspections on skilled nursing homes following a transfer of ownership. This is important, because according to the fiscal note attached to that law, on average, 19 nursing homes in Maryland change ownership to an entity outside of the State annually. And why does that matter? It matters because, increasingly, these facilities are being owned by for-profit entities who are tasked with caring for our most vulnerable. It matters because of entities like the New Jersey based Portopiccolo Group, who bought more than 20 nursing homes during the coronavirus pandemic, leading to disruptions at multiple facilities that weakened care for vulnerable residents amid the worst health crisis in generations.

Increased inspections is a solution. More authority for the Maryland Health Care Commission, in reviewing these transfers of ownership—in the same way that they review new facilities—is a possible solution. And this legislation, facilitating the flow of information from one part of the Maryland Department of Health to another—the Maryland Health Care Commission to the Office of Healthcare Quality—is a solution which I wish we did not have to legislate. But we do. And our state will be better for it. We urge a favorable report.