



Official Testimony

HB 774

Bill Title: Assisted Living Programs – Unlicensed Programs – Resident Abuse and Neglect

Position: Favorable

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the House Government Operations Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones and I am the political director of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East in Maryland/DC. 1199 SEIU is the largest healthcare union in the nation, and here in Maryland we have over 10,000 members working in hospitals, long term care settings, and federally qualified health centers. 1199 SEIU supports HB 774 and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

HB 774 requires the Maryland Department of Health, when investigating an unlicensed assisted living facility, to investigate whether the residents of that facility have been subject to neglect or physical abuse. If the Department finds that an allegation of neglect or physical abuse is credible, or if the operator of the facility is non-cooperative with the Department's investigation, the operator can be subject to immediate prosecution. The bill also allows the Department, the Attorney General, a States' Attorney or a local Health Officer to petition a circuit court for injunctive relief, against the operation of an unlicensed assisted living facility.

1199SEIU members in congregate care settings, including assisted living facilities, care for the most vulnerable elderly in our State, including those who are isolated from family and friends. Residents of unlicensed assisted living facilities are particularly at risk of abuse, given that they are dependent on those who own and operate these homes. There are currently thousands of licensed assisted living facilities in Maryland, and estimates show hundreds of unlicensed facilities operating, with that number growing.

We are concerned about the workforce crisis in long-term care, which we believe is interconnected with the economic stability of the sector. Giving the State the tools it needs to address the allegations and complaints that are increasing with the growth of unlicensed, unregulated facilities is crucial to improving the quality in our long-term care industry. HB 774 is an important step toward protecting the rights of assisted living facility residents and improving our care system.

We respectfully request a favorable report on HB 774.

In Unity,

Ricarra Jones
Political Director
1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East