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Health and Government Operations
Committee
Chair
Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care Subcommittee

House Chair
Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



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Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee

in Support of House Bill 1231

Affordable Assisted Living Enhanced Care Demonstration Program

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Low-income seniors covered by Medicaid in Maryland have few options for assisted living. In 2022, less than 20% of the assisted living beds in the state were Medicaid certified. The situation is only projected to get worse as our residents age.

House Bill 1231 aims to address that situation, through a demonstration project to test the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of providing assisted living care to low-income Maryland seniors in private one-bedroom or studio apartments.

As introduced, this bill proposed a work group to study affordable assisted living, but given subsequent discussions I am offering amendments to create a limited three-site demonstration program, akin to a bill Senator Washington introduced last year. Former Vice Chair, now Senator, Kelly also had legislation several years ago that took a similar approach.

The concept is this: low-income seniors deserve affordable, high quality assisted living, just as much as seniors with means. Under this demonstration project, increases in Maryland Medicaid reimbursement would be leveraged to pay for services that would in turn attract developers and investors to build assisted living communities for low-income seniors.

Under this scenario, no public funding would be needed for construction. These communities would be built entirely with private funding, using low-income housing tax credits.

The goal of this program, which is consistent with Maryland's existing Home and Community Based Medicaid Waiver, is to provide seniors housing, coupled with supportive services, transportation, social activities, and nutritional assistance to keep them healthier. They would

avoid or delay long-term stays in skilled nursing facilities or hospital visits, which end up being far more costly to the state.

Given the enormous waitlist of over 26,000 seniors for Maryland's Home and Community Based Waiver Program, it is clear that the state must begin to explore other options. This program would take an innovative approach to provide much needed support to seniors throughout Maryland by stimulating collaboration and partnership between the public and private sectors.

This model is being successfully utilized right now in Illinois and Washington, DC. Our low-income seniors deserve the same level of quality care.

I urge a favorable report for HB 1231.

March 15, 2023