



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB0509

March 30, 2023

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 509 - Health Care Facilities - Nursing Homes - Acquisitions and Licensure
POSITION: Support

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 509.

SB 509 requires the Maryland Health Care Commission, when evaluating a transfer of ownership of a nursing home, to provide information to the Maryland Office of Health Care Quality on the entity acquiring the facility, including its Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) quality rating, its tax ID number, and its Medicare and Medicaid Services Certification Number. SB 509 will result in more transparency for entities purchasing nursing homes in Maryland, and documentation of whether they have a record of operating facilities that provide quality care to residents.

The Baltimore City Long Term Care Ombudsman program, under federal and State law, acts as an advocate for residents of Baltimore nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The Ombudsman responds to resident complaints about a wide range of issues including poor quality of care, inadequate staffing, and physical, psychological and financial abuse.

In the past five years, the Ombudsman estimates that ownership has changed for 11 of Baltimore City's 28 nursing homes. The owners of all 11 of these appear to operate in multiple states. Five of the 11 have CMS quality ratings of one star (the quality ratings range from one to five stars, with one being the lowest quality rating). The Ombudsman has found that increasingly, as ownership of facilities is transferred to national entities, including private equity firms, that ownership of the facility becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain, and accountability for violation of resident rights is difficult to establish.

SB 509 is a minimal step toward establishing more transparency for nursing homes in Maryland, by requiring applicable State agencies to share information about the entities acquiring nursing homes in Maryland.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 509.