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MAYOR

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HB0774

March 9, 2023

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 774 Assisted Living Programs-Unlicensed Programs-Resident Abuse and Neglect
POSITION: Support

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 774.

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.

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.

Baltimore City's Long-Term Care Ombudsman estimates that there are at least 80 unlicensed assisted living facilities in Baltimore City, and that this number is growing. Baltimore City is a preferred location for these facilities due to the lower cost of housing in the City. The Ombudsman has received multiple complaints about these facilities including allegations of financial, physical, and psychological abuse, and resident neglect. Issues include inadequate food for residents, mismanagement of their medications, and theft of their financial benefits.

HB 774 is an important step toward addressing these forms of abuse and neglect, and protecting the rights of these older and disabled citizens of Maryland, who are isolated and at the mercy of these unscrupulous operators.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 774.

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