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**SB 351 Maryland Legal Services Corporation – Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FAVORABLE
February 16, 2023**

Good afternoon Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. AARP Maryland supports SB 351 On behalf of our almost 900,000 members, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 351 Maryland Legal Services Corporation—Affordable Life, Wills and Estate Planning. We thank Senator Washington for introducing SB 351.

SB 351 establishes a seniors program for the purpose of establishing the Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning for Seniors Program in the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

Older adults have unique health and social needs. Many are on fixed incomes. Often, older adults depend on government benefits and services that have complex requirements. Navigating this system can require access to competent legal assistance. As such, elder law has become a recognized specialization within the legal profession. Appropriate certification is required.

Policymakers should expand access to free or reduced-cost legal services for older adults with low and moderate incomes. This includes exploring legislative reforms to expand access to counsel in civil cases in which basic needs are at stake, such as eviction and debt claims proceedings.

Policymakers should encourage the implementation of innovative programs to expand access to legal services. These could include medical-legal partnerships. They should promote, through technical assistance, best practices in linking health and legal services within the health care setting.

Program to provide assistance to low- and moderate-income seniors with the preparation of legal documents, civil proceedings, and other matters.

Thank you and for these reasons, AARP MD ask for a favorable report on SB 351. If you have questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

