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TO: The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: W. Zak Shirley, Director, Maryland Medicaid Fraud Control Unit
On behalf of The Office of the Attorney General

RE: SB 0797 - Establishing a Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse - **Support**

Chair Smith and distinguished members of the Committee,

My name is Zak Shirley, and I am the Director of the Maryland Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) in the Office of the Attorney General. Since 1979, the MFCU has been a bulwark against the abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of Maryland's vulnerable adults. During that time, our Unit has seen firsthand how laws designed to protect elderly and disabled residents are put into practice and what tools are most effective at preventing and punishing crimes against those populations. We have, over the years, developed many ideas for improvements to the system and identified weaknesses that could be addressed by changes to existing law.

Senate Bill 797's proposed creation of a Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse presents an exciting opportunity for the Office of the Attorney General to collaborate with other stakeholders in the elder abuse space to identify areas of improvement and make formal recommendations. Elder abuse is a multifaceted problem that must be addressed from all angles, including social, economic, and legal. The MFCU believes that the multi-disciplinary approach proposed by this bill is the proper method for identifying systemic changes to effectively combat elder abuse and create lasting change for Maryland's vulnerable populations.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on SB 797.

This bill letter is a statement of the Office of Attorney General's policy position on the referenced pending legislation. For a legal or constitutional analysis of the bill, Members of the House and Senate should consult with the Counsel to the General Assembly, Sandy Brantley. She can be reached at 410-946-5600 or sbrantley@oag.state.md.us