

Senior Legal Services



The Bar Association of Baltimore City | Baltimore Bar Foundation, Inc.

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February 28, 2023

Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 1191: Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse

Dear Delegate Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Senior Legal Services (SLS) to request a favorable report from the Judiciary Committee on HB 1191. SLS supports the creation of this Task Force because it provides for the thorough and insightful investigation into the protections currently available, and more importantly those not available, to Maryland's seniors who have fallen victim to elder abuse. Senior Legal Services would be glad to provide a representative to serve as a member of this Task Force.

Senior Legal Services is a longstanding provider of free civil legal advice, services, and representation to lower-income Baltimore City residents aged 60 and older. SLS was founded in 1991 as a joint project of the Bar Association of Baltimore City and the Baltimore Bar Foundation, Inc. One important part of SLS is our *Elder Justice Initiative*, which specifically serves older adults who are now, or have been, victims of abuse, neglect, and/or financial exploitation. SLS's *Elder Justice Initiative* Attorney engages in community-based outreach to Baltimore City seniors and then provides direct legal representation to victims and engages pro bono attorneys to do the same.

Two significant barriers SLS faces when providing services to victims of elder abuse are reluctance of the victim to seek assistance due to embarrassment or fear and a lack of remedies to make the victim whole when they do come forward. We are hopeful that the proposed Task Force will provide informed recommendations to the State as to how to reduce the stigma surrounding elder abuse, curtail the abuse preemptively, and establish more effective practical remedies for victims and consequences for abusers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Viola Woolums".

Viola Woolums, Esq.

Director, Senior Legal Services