



SB 351/HB 760
MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION -
AFFORDABLE LIFE, WILLS, AND ESTATE PLANNING FOR SENIORS PROGRAM
IN THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
MARCH 1, 2023
POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH SPONSOR AMENDMENTS

The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (“PBRC”), an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the statewide thought leader and clearinghouse for volunteer civil legal services in Maryland. As the designated pro bono arm of the Maryland State Bar Association, PBRC provides training, mentorship, and pro bono service opportunities to members of the private bar and offers direct legal services through free legal clinics. **PBRC supports SB 351/HB 760 because legacy homeowners of limited financial means deserve access to legal assistance that may help preserve homeownership and generational wealth for their heirs.**

PBRC has been providing pro bono estate planning services to low-income seniors since 2015 through community-based legal clinics in Baltimore City and Prince George’s County. Given the large percentage of homes owned by low-income seniors caring for children and grandchildren, ensuring that the home stays within the family is essential for intergenerational long-term stability. Advance and life planning services (including advance medical directives, wills, and financial powers of attorney) help ensure access to financial resources needed to pay home maintenance costs such as taxes and utility bills when an elderly homeowner becomes ill, and facilitates the smooth transfer of deeds with clear title to children and grandchildren. Wills are an effective way for families to inherit assets such as a home and preserve intergenerational wealth, particularly in communities with low incomes, in which the majority of a family’s total wealth may be represented by a home. Overwhelmingly, our clients report through our clinics’ exit surveys that they feel relieved, comforted, and more at peace knowing that they have put legal documents in place that will help ensure their family’s stability well into the future.

PBRC supports **SB 351/HB 760 with sponsor amendments that align income eligibility guidelines with current Maryland Legal Services Corporation guidelines,** which may further the goal of preserving homeownership and the transfer of intergenerational wealth for low-income Marylanders. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For the above reasons,
PBRC urges a FAVORABLE WITH SPONSOR AMENDMENTS
report on SB 351/HB 760

Please contact Allison Harris, Director of PBRC's Home Preservation Project, with any questions.
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