

Testimony Before the House Health & Government Operations Committee

March 28, 2024

Senate Bill 952 – Assisted Living Programs – Assisted Living Referrers – Requirements and Prohibitions

Support

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for Senate Bill 952– Assisted Living Programs - Assisted Living Referrers – Requirements and Prohibitions. As social workers, we support this bill because it provides vital protections for vulnerable adults who need care in an assisted living facility.

It has been our experience that assisted living referral agencies often operate without regard to the needs or rights of the individuals who need care in assisted living facilities. We hear from families that these agencies often refer them to facilities that are ill-equipped to provide the needed care. Some referral agencies even direct families to unlicensed facilities. We have also worked with families who tell us that the agencies sell their information to other providers of eldercare services. Families report receiving aggressive marketing calls from these companies, at the very time when they are stressed with tough decisions about the care of their loved ones.

This bill would tighten the requirements for assisted living referrers and hold them to professional standards. For example:

- The bill requires that their staff undergo criminal background checks. This provision is essential to protecting potential residents.
- The bill’s requirement that the referrers have liability insurance will make it more likely that clients who sue these providers will receive financial compensation.
- The requirement that the Office of Health Care Quality maintain a more user-friendly data base of licensed assisted living facilities should make it easy for both the referrers and potential residents to know that the facilities under consideration are licensed.
- The requirement that referrers sign a HIPPA agreement with clients should protect the personal information of potential assisted living residents.

This bill is urgently needed to safeguard the health and wellbeing of Marylanders who need assisted living care. We ask that you give a favorable report to Senate Bill 952.

Respectfully,

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