



**Re: Maryland HB 1177**

**Respectfully submitted by Allison Combs, Vice President of Sales, Marketing and Communications, National Lutheran Communities & Services**

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, Madam Vice Chair and members of this committee for the opportunity to share my opposition to HB 1177. Many of the items included in HB 1177, can be easily addressed and resolved through the appropriate resident governance structure already in place.

As I've studied this bill, I can see Delegate Terri Hill's passion and interest for older adults—likely the same passion of those of us who have chosen senior living as our calling and career.

National Lutheran Communities & Services has Life Plan (also known as CCRC) communities in Maryland and Virginia. As a multi-site organization headquartered in Frederick, Maryland, our mission is to honor, inspire and support choice in **partnership** with older adults. In reviewing HB 1177, I believe that the experience of residents in a limited number of poorly run organizations has created the perceived necessity to create the legislation being presented in HB 1177. I encourage the committee to have a deeper understanding of the “why” behind the language in this bill before moving forward.

In each National Lutheran Life Plan community, there is a resident association, that represents all independent living residents (other levels of care have separate resident council groups.) The by-laws of these associations guide the relationship with the community's administration/management as well as with each other. The association includes three elected executive officers and chairs of the standing committees – activities, culinary and dining, facilities and maintenance, finance, health and wellness, marketing and communications, philanthropy, and spiritual life. Ad hoc committees may also be formed as determined and supported by the association's executive officers.

Each of these committees includes several residents who use their expertise and passions as a means to become involved in the life of the community and in the development of programs and policies that best meet the needs of residents.

Overall, the residents have cooperated with community leadership to establish an association that assists community leadership in developing and facilitating programs and services that will enhance the quality of life for the independent living residents, while understanding that the community's administration is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the community.

I share this background as an example and testimony of how the working relationship between community leadership and the residents of a Life Plan Community, can be successful. In specific examples of partnership:

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*National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS) is a faith-based, not-for-profit ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Delaware-Maryland, Metropolitan Washington, D.C. and Virginia Synods, serving people of all beliefs. NLCS honors, inspires and supports choice and opportunity in partnership with older adults.*

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- The resident Finance Committee is made aware of the financial standing of the organization on a quarterly basis. The chair of this committee then takes the learned information to the association's quarterly meeting to share with the entire association.
- The resident Culinary and Dining Committee assists the executive chef with the creation of the menu based on feedback from resident surveys.
- The resident Health and Wellness Committee assists community leadership on fire safety education for all residents.

While I appreciate the intent behind HB 1177 to enhance resident representation and voice in a CCRC (Life Plan Community), I encourage the committee to not consider legislating what should be taken care of through strong community management partnership with the already-required resident association.

Again, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my experience with positive resident and community leadership collaboration and partnership. I respectfully request an unfavorable report on HB 1177.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Combs".

Allison Combs  
Vice President of Sales, Marketing and Communications  
National Lutheran Communities & Service