



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Good afternoon, Chairman Peña-Melnyk, and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present HB 1475 Health Facilities - Delegation of Inspection Authority - Related Institutions and Nursing Homes.

This bill addresses the lack of inspections of nursing home facilities needed to keep the residents safe and comfortable by allowing local governments to conduct those inspections.

Annual inspection of nursing home facilities is essential to the well-being of and safety of their residents. Historically there have been issues of staffing ratios, the skills of workers, and the adequacy of facilities. The regular inspections help to identify those issues in each facility and help to create a plan to resolve them.

In Maryland, the Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ), under the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), is charged with monitoring the quality of care in nursing homes, as well as other health care facilities and community-based programs on behalf of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. In addition to the surveys and inspections, OHCQ is responsible for nursing home licensing, inspections, and certification of compliance.

However, OHCQ is rarely staffed at the levels needed to fulfill its mission to oversee over 21,000 facilities in 47 different industries. To support these efforts, more than 20 years ago, Montgomery County signed an MOU with the state to allow the County to hire inspectors and surveyors to oversee the care in its 34 nursing homes. The county had a team of surveyors to conduct certifications, surveys and to follow up on complaints. The team included nurse and nurse administrators that were employed by the County Department of Health and Human Services. The state supported the cost of these positions. As a result, each facility was inspected annually, and their findings were reported to the state. Violations were addressed by state and federal regulators.

In 2021, the MOU expired and efforts to reinstate it with MDH have faltered. In July of that year, the activities of the County team were absorbed by the state. Since that time the following has occurred:

Year of Last Inspection	Number of Facilities
2019	10
2020	13
2021	10
2022	1
2023	0

When the County was responsible for the inspection, they were happening much more frequently.

HB 1475 attempts to address this issue by allowing that any county government that wishes to take on the responsibility of oversight of its nursing homes, reporting the results to the state, could do so. This bill will be conformed to the amended version from the Senate that makes it clear that a county must request an agreement with MDH, that it would apply only to nursing home facilities and that there would be a cost sharing agreement between the county and state government agencies.

I am currently consulting with MDH to determine how best to assure that our most vulnerable seniors, living in the most restrictive facilities, have their basic needs met in a comforting and supportive environment and are safe. Those discussions include how the local and state governments can work in partnership to achieve these goals.

Thank you for your consideration, and I humbly request a favorable report.