

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 690 - Charles County - Adult Protective Services Review Board - Membership - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide unfavorable testimony for House Bill 690 (HB 690). With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, we empower Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to workforce development and career opportunities. The Social Services Administration within DHS implements the Adult Services programs, which is affected by HB 690.

HB 690 alters the composition of the Adult Public Guardianship Review Board in Charles County to authorize the appointment of a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner in the field of psychiatry to serve on the board instead of a psychiatrist. We introduced Senate Bill 270 (SB 270) to address our concerns for all Public Guardianship Review Boards statewide. Our departmental legislation goes further than HB 690, refining specific membership requirements to include other professions with expertise in prescribing or oversight of mental health medications. We believe experience with and knowledge of mental health medication is critical on multidisciplinary review boards. We oppose counties carving out divergent board membership composition as we believe a uniform composition across the state is required, especially in the area of expertise of mental health related medications. We believe statewide modifications to the composition of guardianship review boards in SB 270 will help address the Board vacancy concerns HB 690 seeks to solve while ensuring the reviews of adults under public guardianship are as robust and thorough as possible.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide the Committee with our reasons for opposition to HB 690 for consideration during your deliberations. We look forward to the decision of the Committee and welcome continued collaboration to support the State's public guardianship review boards.

If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,



Rafael López
Secretary

