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Legislative District 11  
Baltimore County

Chair, Rules Committee  
Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*  
Capital Budget  
Health and Human Services  
Chair, Pensions

*Joint Committees*  
Senate Chair, Audit and Evaluation  
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
SB 945 COMMUNITY-BASED RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES - LICENSING ENTITIES -  
PROVISION OF LICENSING CRITERIA AND SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT

A few years ago, one of my constituents wrote to me seeking our assistance to find out who they could contact to express concerns about their nextdoor neighbors. The residents left trash and debris in the yard, allowed snow to accumulate on the sidewalk, and repeatedly blocked my constituent's driveway with their cars. When my constituent could no longer reason with the staff, she sought the state's assistance.

However, she did not know which state organization could ensure that the facility operated responsibly. After countless phone calls and emails to various departments and agencies, she was no closer to having answers. My constituent felt that there was no accountability, and she and the other members of the community were frustrated with an inability to ascertain who was ultimately responsible for ensuring that the neighbors were responsible. "If you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu," she said in a recent phone call.

It doesn't have to be this way. Communities and group homes can—and *must*—co-exist. Community-based homes provide *vital* housing and care services to vulnerable Marylanders, including individuals with developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and elderly persons requiring assistance. Last year, I toured a residential facility in my district and was amazed at its integration into the neighborhood. But what happens when that is not the case?

The goal of Senate Bill 945 is to encourage communication and collaboration between group homes and the communities they operate in. To accomplish this goal, the bill stipulates that state agencies, when requested, release the criteria they relied on when granting or renewing a license to operate a community-based residential facility. Furthermore, the bill requires each agency that issues these licenses to establish a single point of contact for fielding complaints and concerns regarding the facilities.

These measures would empower community members with clearer information about facility licensing and standards, thereby streamlining the complaint process, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and potentially improving overall quality of care through greater agency oversight. Indeed, if communities and residential facilities are to not only co-exist, but also *thrive*, we must create a more accessible and transparent regulatory system, where *everyone* has a seat at the table. Thank you for considering Senate Bill 945.