

Written Testimony for **HB 141: Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation**: Please **VOTE NO** on this legislation!!

Dear HGO Committee:

This bill reads: "...Establishing the State Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation to evaluate the causes of and other factors contributing to the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by individuals in the State..."

The bill goes on to state what types of professionals, community members, even students must comprise this Task Force. "...The members of the Task Force shall elect cochairs of the Task Force from 16 among the members of the Task Force...The Maryland Department of Health shall provide staff for the Task Force..." It goes on to list the four things that the Task Force shall do.

I have no problem with the intent of this bill and what the "established" Task Force will attempt to determine or even do with the information.

My issue with this bill is that it should **not** be a bill at all. There is no reason for the government to get involved whatsoever. There can be a Task Force set up **without** making this a law, and there can be a Task Force **outside** government regulations. The private sector should take on this task, if it is necessary at all. This is an enormous undertaking that will **cost Marylanders** a lot of money. Taxes will need to be raised **yet again** to cover this endeavor. Not to mention the logistical issues of coordination of efforts between all the members. Also, why did this Task Force include members of the LGBTQIA+ community but no other groups within the community?. Do other groups of the community not suffer from loneliness and isolation? What about the elderly? What about different racial groups? What about different religious groups? What about rural communities vs. urban communities? I see that the bill lists assisted living facility residents and librarians from different sized communities. What about just elderly residents who live in their homes? What about regular residents who live in different sized communities? Why librarians versus regular residents? The bill lists "...one representative of an organization in the State that advocates for individuals with a physical disability..." What about a regular resident with a physical disability? The bill includes "...one representative of an organization in the State that develops mobile applications that are intended to address loneliness and isolation..." Why do we need a mobile app for this? If the elderly are a huge part of the lonely and isolated population, are they even going to use a mobile app or other forms of "technology"?

There are already community centers and libraries that citizens of all ages, races, religions, etc. can use to get together with other community members. Libraries do a

great job of making programs available to all different types of people who like all different types of activities, like crafting, etc. There are local bird-watching groups. Hospitals not only have health-related groups, like groups for people living with diabetes for example, but they also have programs like “Understanding Grandparenting”, “Understanding Fatherhood” (MedStar hospitals), and other “wellness”-type programs. Churches also have programs as well.

There are lots of facilities with all kinds of programs for all kinds of people in our communities that are run by other organizations other than the government!! And I think these programs are well-organized and well advertised. There is no need for a government-run program that will simply raise our taxes and drive up the cost of living in Maryland even further than it has already gone up in the last several years. The more we spend and then increase our citizens’ taxes, the more likely we are to drive people to move out of Maryland altogether.

Please **VOTE NO** on this bill. It will only increase costs for our residents and will not have the desired outcome that is already being offered by other organizations in our communities already.

Thank you.

Trudy Tibbals
A Very Concerned Mother and Maryland Resident