



HB 576
Health Care Facilities -Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Programs- Video Recordings
In the Health and Government Operations Committee
Hearing on February 13, 2025
Position: Favorable

*Maryland Legal Aid submits its written and oral testimony supporting at the request of Rhea L. Harris,
Deputy Chief of Legislative Affairs at the Office of the Attorney General.*

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) asks that the Committee report **favorably and pass HB 576**, which would require skilled nursing and assisted living facilities in Maryland to install video monitoring in all common areas to detect abuse, neglect or exploitation of residents. MLA has represented thousands of vulnerable clients in these facilities, many of whom have experienced neglect and abuse. We believe this bill is a crucial step toward enhancing the safety and dignity of older and disabled residents of these facilities across the state.

MLA is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State's low-income and vulnerable residents. Our twelve offices serve residents in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions and handle a range of civil legal matters, including representation of adults residing in nursing home and assisted living facilities, in cases relating to health care access and unlawful discharges from skilled nursing and assisted living facilities. Many of the individuals we represent are at a heightened risk of mistreatment due to their age, health conditions, and dependence on care providers. Unfortunately, abuse and neglect in health care settings can often go unnoticed or unreported, leaving vulnerable residents at substantial risk.

At present, there is no existing law or regulation that requires the monitoring of common areas in these facilities, which are defined in the bill as dining areas, meeting rooms, hallways, facility entrances, activity and living rooms. This legislation would empower law enforcement and necessary state personnel to conduct thorough and timely investigations of reported abuse and neglect, with video evidence playing a key role in the process. We believe that with the correct oversight, this law will not only prevent or reduce future incidents but also will improve accountability and transparency in facilities where our most vulnerable residents reside.

MLA's clients report falling, denial of meal delivery, and/or physical abuse, and neglect. Any of these incidents could be evidenced by video recording in common areas. We have represented residents with dementia in memory care units in skilled nursing facilities who were inadequately supervised. This would likely be demonstrated by video recordings at entrances and other common areas. Unfortunately, the lack of supervision and accountability on the part of facilities can lead to attempts to evict and displace residents.

We have seen first-hand how difficult it can be for individuals and families to navigate the complex legal and investigative processes when complaints of abuse or neglect are reported to the Office of Health Care Quality or to the Office of the Attorney General. Video monitoring serves as a mechanism to hold facilities accountable to the standard of care they are required to

provide. This will provide additional safety and peace of mind to families and residents that their well-being is being taken seriously by authorities. It will also serve to enhance prosecution of individuals that engage in dangerous practices.

On behalf of all residents in these health facilities who feel powerless and need more protection of their rights as human beings, MLA strongly urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report and PASSAGE of HB 576. If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Spraker, (410) 951-7763, JSpraker@mdlab.org.