

TO: Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: LeadingAge Maryland
SUBJECT: House Bill 141, Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation
DATE: January 29, 2025
POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

LeadingAge Maryland supports with amendments House Bill 141, Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation.

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 140 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Members of LeadingAge Maryland provide health care, housing, and services to more than 20,000 older persons each year. Our mission is to be the trusted voice for aging in Maryland, and our vision is that Maryland is a state where older adults have access to the services they need, when they need them, in the place they call home. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, public agencies, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland. LeadingAge Maryland represents the vast majority of CCRCs in the state.

House Bill 141 establishes 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 requires the Task Force to make recommendations regarding the creation of municipal-based social connection committees to address the isolation experienced by certain individuals and to report the findings to the Governor and committees of the General Assembly by June 30, 2026.

Approximately 25% of Americans aged 65 and older are considered socially isolated, according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). Social isolation is linked to a 50% increased risk of dementia, a 29% increased risk of heart disease, and a 32% increased risk of stroke. These statistics highlight the significant health risks associated with social isolation among older adults.

LeadingAge Maryland supports the effort to better identify and address social isolation and loneliness. We appreciate the inclusion of individuals living and working in Assisted Living, but note there are key populations of older adults currently unrepresented on the taskforce.

Amendments: Given the unique needs of older adults, particularly those on limited and low incomes and those who are home bound, LeadingAge Maryland requests the following additions to the Task Force:

- One service coordinator who works in affordable senior housing.

- One representative from a community-based organization serving older adults who are home bound.
- One older adult (older than 65) who lives in an affordable senior housing community.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report with amendments for House Bill 141.