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The Honorable Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

Support Testimony for HB1291 – Health Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Family Councils

Hearing Date: March 06, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a proud Immigrant, Parent, Community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I appreciate the opportunity to testify to and express my **strong support** for HB1291, which would strengthen family involvement in assisted living programs by formally establishing Family Councils in facilities with 15 or more beds.

For many families, placing a loved one in assisted living is an emotional and difficult decision. Families want reassurance that their relatives are receiving quality care, respect, and dignity, but too often, communication between families and facilities is inconsistent or inadequate. HB1291 ensures that families have a structured platform to voice concerns, collaborate with facility management, and advocate for better care.

Why HB1291 is Necessary

1. Empowers Families to Advocate for Residents

- Many residents, especially seniors or those with disabilities, cannot effectively advocate for themselves due to health limitations.
- A Family Council gives loved ones a formal voice in raising issues and proposing improvements.
- This is especially important for families, who may face language barriers or unfamiliarity with healthcare regulations and struggle to navigate the system on their own.

2. Improve Transparency & Accountability

- HB1291 requires assisted living programs to respond in writing to concerns raised by Family Councils within 14 days, ensuring issues are acknowledged and addressed.
- Facilities must maintain records of these communications, promoting openness and accountability in care decisions.

3. **Enhances Communication Between Families & Facilities**

- When families are involved, residents experience better outcomes - emotionally, socially, and physically.
- New and prospective residents will also receive clear information about Family Councils, ensuring they know how to stay involved in their loved one's care.

4. **Promote Collaboration, Not Conflict**

- Family Councils are not meant to create adversarial relationships with assisted living providers. Instead, they foster teamwork and problem-solving, leading to higher-quality care for all residents.

Why This Matters for Immigrant & Minority Communities

In many cultures, family involvement in elder care is deeply valued, but navigating the assisted living system can be challenging. Language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of access to information often make it difficult for families to advocate effectively for their loved ones. HB1291 ensures that all families, regardless of background, have a recognized role in shaping the care their loved ones receive.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to **support HB1291** and pass this bill to give families the tools they need to advocate for their loved ones in assisted living facilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui