

**Testimony Before the House Health & Government Operations Committee
March 6, 2025**

**House Bill 1291
Health Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Family Councils**

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers - Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD), Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for House Bill 1291, Health Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Family Councils. As social workers, we are in support of this bill because it provides a robust platform for advocacy, communication, and collaboration for those residing in Assisted Living Facilities and their families.

Family Councils have been in existence in nursing homes since the 1987 Nursing Home Reform Law. House Bill 1291 would authorize Assisted Living Facilities to provide the same platform for residents and families to express concerns, advocate for changes, and engage in meaningful discussions with facility administration and staff.

Often older Marylanders need assistance with activities of daily living (dressing, bathing, etc.), medication management and a safe, accessible environment. Assisted Living Facilities can provide the right amount of support that an older adult needs to thrive. Assisted Living Facilities are opening up everywhere to address the need. They are an important care option for older adults and their families.

Family Councils in nursing homes play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of care and life for residents. They will do the same in Assisted Living Facilities. They will serve as a collective platform where family members can share experiences and take part in decision-making processes regarding the care provided to their loved one. By serving as a communication bridge between families and facility staff, Family Councils can lead to improvements in care quality and resident satisfaction.

Trusting a loved one's care to others can be a difficult process. Family councils can help families build trust with the facility staff. Family councils can bring grievances or concerns to the facility staff and expect a written response within 14 days after initiating a communication. This bill will ensure families' concerns are heard, documented, and made available in a public file that can be reviewed by a resident or prospective resident or family. Family Councils also ensure residents have a say in their day-to-day care, meals, and the activities available to them. Importantly, Family Councils will help to ensure that resident rights are respected. For these reasons, we ask that you support House Bill 1291.

Respectfully,

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