



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: January 17, 2025

Bill Number: **SB170**

Bill Title: Criminal Law - Benefits Exploitation

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings

MDOA Position: FAVORABLE

The Department of Aging (MDOA) thanks the Chair and Committee members for the opportunity to submit this favorable testimony for Senate Bill (SB) 170 - Criminal Law - Benefits Exploitation.

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) serves as Maryland's State Unit on Aging, administering federal and state funding for core programs, overseeing the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) network at the local level that provides supportive services to older adults, and planning for Maryland's growing older adult population. MDOA and AAAs work to prevent all forms of abuse of older adults through: the work of the Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman, public elder abuse awareness efforts, funding legal aid service organizations for older adults who are victims of elder abuse and exploitation and serving as the public guardians for older adults over 65 where no one else suitable is available. MDOA's Maryland Access Point service is a wide-ranging single point of entry for services and options counseling for older adults, caregivers and other community members. As mandated reporters, MAP staff within AAAs regularly make reports of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of older adults to local Adult Protective Services investigators based on information shared during MAP interactions with older adults. Notably, MDOA recently convened and participated on the Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse authorized by Senate Bill 797 and House Bill 1191 of 2023. This Task Force recently issued its final report to the General Assembly, noting that abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults is a pervasive problem in Maryland that will increase



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along with the growing older adult population.¹ One of the broad takeaways from this Task Force is that Maryland should strengthen existing criminal statutes to address the “exploitation of resources, or assets or benefits for older adults, such as pensions, public, social security, veteran’s, and retirement.”² SB223 provides an appropriate opportunity to do so. While applying an inclusive, across the lifespan approach for anyone whose government benefits are exploited, this will squarely benefit older adults who have had their government benefits exploited, from Medicare to Social Security or SNAP. The opportunity to provide greater access to justice for older adults is a goal of MDOA’s Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative, which will work to make Maryland more prepared for our increasingly longer lives over the next several years.

For these reasons, the Department of Aging respectfully urges a **favorable** report for SB170. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at andrea.nunez@maryland.gov or (443) 414-8183.

Sincerely,

Carmel Roques
Secretary
Maryland Department of Aging

¹ Task Force on Countering and Preventing Elder Abuse Report, December 23, 2024, pg. 5, *available at*: [https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDoA/SB797Ch706HB1191Ch707\(2023\)_2024\(5\).pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDoA/SB797Ch706HB1191Ch707(2023)_2024(5).pdf)

² *Id.* at 11.