



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
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HB0187

Jan 28th , 2025

TO: Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: HB 0187 -Criminal Law - Benefits Exploitation

POSITION: Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports House Bill 187.

HB 187 clarifies that exploitation related to another person's government benefits is a criminal act that should be prohibited in the State of Maryland. The bill also clearly defines the methods by which bad actors exploit others for their own personal gain, including coercion, deception, and isolation. This bill is critical to ensuring older adults and persons with disabilities, who are often targeted by this type of exploitation, are protected from this type of exploitation and trafficking.

The Baltimore City Health Department Division of Aging and Community Support acts as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Baltimore City. Our agency also houses the Long-term Care Ombudsman program, which advocates for residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Our Ombudsman staff report that some of these facilities are taking advantage of their residents' vulnerability and isolation and, through coercion and deception, are gaining control of their benefit payments. SB 170, by defining forms of exploitation and deception and creating criminal penalties for them, will strengthen the ability of our agency and our law enforcement parties to protect the rights of these residents.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a favorable report on Hb 187.