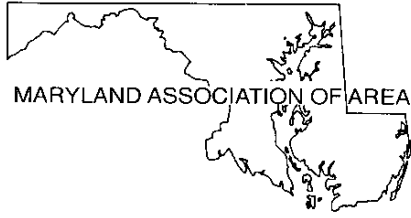


M 4 A



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

*Karen Winkowski
President
Representing Harford County
Office on Aging*

*Erin Bird, Vice President
Representing Cecil County
Department of Community Services*

*Ofelia Ross Ott, Treasurer
Representing Howard County
Office on Aging and Independence*

*Heang Tan, Secretary
Representing Baltimore County
Department of Aging*

House Appropriations Committee

April 7, 2026

Senate Bill 340 - Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman - Mandatory Appropriation

Support

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Area Agencies on Aging (M4A), we respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 340, which establishes an ongoing funding mechanism for the Maryland Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

Maryland's long-term care system serves a growing and increasingly vulnerable population. Across the State, there are 220 nursing homes and 1,622 licensed assisted living facilities, representing 54,287 beds. Residents in these settings rely on the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to protect their health, safety, welfare, and rights.

M4A represents the State's 19 Area Agencies on Aging, each of which houses a local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. Ombudsmen serve as independent, resident-directed advocates who investigate complaints, provide information and assistance, and play a critical preventive role by educating residents, families, and providers about residents' rights.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2025, Maryland's Long-Term Care Ombudsmen investigated and resolved 3,978 complaints, with 86 percent resolved to the satisfaction of the resident. Ombudsmen made more than 7,200 visits to nursing homes and assisted living facilities and provided over 7,000 instances of information and assistance to residents and families. They also supported resident and family councils and conducted community education across the State.

Despite the essential nature of this work, funding for the Ombudsman Program—and for the Area Agencies on Aging that administer it locally—has remained flat for more than a decade and far below

(over)

what is needed to meet current demand. This chronic underfunding has constrained local capacity, limiting the frequency of facility visits, slowing response times, and reducing outreach, even as facilities, complaints, and resident needs have continued to grow.

The most frequent complaints raised by residents involve discharge or eviction, medications, personal care, residents' rights, and abuse or neglect—issues that directly affect safety and dignity. Ombudsmen often resolve these concerns before they escalate, benefiting residents, families, facilities, and the State as a whole.

For these reasons, M4A strongly supports Senate Bill 340 and respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

Who is M4A?

The nineteen member organizations of Maryland's Association of Area Agencies on Aging (M4A) serve Maryland's older and disabled citizens, providing a range of cost-effective state, federal and locally funded programs that help individuals remain secure in the community with dignity, independence, and choice as they age. M4A and its associated Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) represent the "front line" in Maryland's challenge to meet the complex and varied needs of well over one million older adults statewide. M4A's goal is to ensure coordination and communication with all partners on all aspects of senior service planning to enhance opportunity and availability to all eligible citizens.