



**Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee
April 7, 2026**

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

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD), we wish to express our support for Senate Bill 340 - Nursing Facilities - Medicaid Quality Assessment - Funding of Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

As social workers serving older adults, we are in favor of this bill because we understand the value a Long Term Care Ombudsman brings to residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. This bill would provide much-needed additional funding that would strengthen the program.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program was mandated by the Federal Older Americans Act in 1978 to investigate complaints, protect the rights, and improve the quality of life for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Ombudsmen encourage self-advocacy by providing information, assistance, and support to residents. They also provide information and education to staff on issues that pertain to resident rights. They often work closely with the facility social workers. In fact, it is often the social worker who enlists the support of the Ombudsman for the residents or make sure the residents are aware of their services.

A Long-Term Care Ombudsman role is complex. The Ombudsman listens to a resident's' concerns and develops a resolution plan that is workable for the resident and staff. Ombudsmen support residents' families, who value their impartiality. Ombudsmen also conduct drop-in visits to ensure that residents are aware of their services, and they attend resident council meetings to educate about resident rights often in creative ways like Resident Rights Bingo.

Ombudsmen are invaluable in safeguarding resident rights. Unfortunately, there are not enough of them to provide coverage for the over 54,000 residents across 1,850 facilities in our state. Today the Maryland Department of Aging heavily utilizes volunteer Ombudsmen to advocate for residents, but more funding is needed to hire additional professional staff.

Senate Bill 340 would ensure minimum funding for the operation of the Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman. With additional funds it would be possible to hire additional Long Term Care Ombudsmen so more of our vulnerable long-term care residents can receive the valuable support the Ombudsman provides. For all these reasons, we ask for your favorable report on Senate Bill 340.

Respectfully,

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