



TESTIMONY FOR SB0340 –Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman - Mandatory Appropriation – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Senator Hettleman

Committee: Appropriations

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0340 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to promote legislation that strengthens education, healthcare, public safety, environmental protection, and social justice—ensuring that every Marylander has access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

SB0340 advances that mission by strengthening oversight, accountability, and protections for older Marylanders living in nursing facilities.

This bill requires the Governor to include in the annual budget bill at least 3% of the special funds collected from the Medicaid quality assessment imposed on certain nursing facilities to support the operations of the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman. This dedicated funding stream ensures that the Ombudsman’s Office—charged with advocating for residents, investigating complaints, and safeguarding the rights and well-being of individuals in long-term care—has the resources necessary to fulfill its critical responsibilities.

These provisions are both timely and essential.

The Ombudsman process is one of the most important safeguards Maryland has for protecting older adults in nursing facilities. Ombudspersons serve as independent advocates who listen to residents, investigate concerns, and intervene when care, safety, or dignity is at risk. They provide a trusted, accessible avenue for residents and families who may feel powerless navigating complex systems or raising concerns within

a facility. Their work not only resolves individual issues but also identifies systemic problems, elevates resident voices, and drives improvements across the long-term care sector.

Ensuring the Ombudsman's Office is adequately funded is a direct investment in the health, safety, and dignity of Maryland's older adults. As our state's aging population grows and nursing facilities continue to face staffing and operational challenges, the need for strong, well-resourced oversight has never been greater.

By guaranteeing a stable, predictable source of funding, SB0340 strengthens the state's ability to:

- Conduct timely investigations of complaints,
- Monitor facility conditions and resident safety,
- Support families navigating complex care systems, and
- Ensure that nursing facilities meet their obligations to provide safe, dignified, and high-quality care.

This bill also reflects responsible fiscal policy. The Medicaid quality assessment is already collected from nursing facilities; directing a small portion of these funds to the Ombudsman's Office ensures that the revenue generated within the long-term care system is reinvested to protect the very residents it is meant to serve.

SB0340 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens healthcare oversight, protects vulnerable residents, and promotes fairness, accountability, and community well-being. Ensuring that the Ombudsman's Office is adequately funded is not only a matter of good governance—it is a matter of dignity and justice for Maryland's older adults.

We urge the Committee to support this thoughtful, necessary, and community-centered legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. **We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0340.**