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BILL NO: SB 340
TITLE: Nursing Facilities – Medicaid Quality Assessment – Funding of Office of the 3 Long-Term Care Ombudsman
SPONSOR: Senator Hettleman
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: SUPPORT
DATE: February 10, 2026

Baltimore County SUPPORTS Senate Bill 340 – Funding the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

The Baltimore County Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is currently housed at the Baltimore County Department of Aging, which serves as Baltimore County’s Area Agency on Aging. Baltimore County is home to one of the largest and fastest-growing populations of older adults in Maryland, and demand for effective oversight and advocacy in long-term care settings continues to grow accordingly. The Baltimore County Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program serves approximately 9,200 individuals across 43 nursing homes and 187 licensed assisted living facilities, representing more than 9,000 licensed beds countywide.

Senate Bill 340 provides a critical and timely funding mechanism to ensure that residents of long-term care facilities have access to independent advocacy to protect their health, safety, welfare, and rights. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program plays an essential role in identifying, investigating, and resolving complaints raised by residents and their families. In Fiscal Year 2025 alone, the Baltimore County program opened **566 cases**, closed **483 cases**, and addressed **775 complaints**, the majority of which involved concerns about quality of care, residents’ rights and dignity, abuse or neglect, and admission, transfer, or discharge issues.

Beyond complaint investigation, Long-Term Care Ombudsmen serve a critical preventive and educational function. The program conducts “routine access visits” to provide information and assistance to residents and families, support resident and family councils, and deliver education and training to facility staff and community members. In FY2025, the Baltimore County program completed more than **1,100 instances of information and assistance**, nearly **800 “routine access visits”**, and participated extensively in resident and family councils and facility engagement efforts. These activities help prevent problems before they escalate and strengthen transparency and accountability within long-term care settings.

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The Baltimore County Department of Aging works daily with older adults, caregivers, service providers, and state and local partners. This on-the-ground experience underscores the growing complexity and volume of cases facing the Ombudsman Program and the need for sufficient, sustainable funding to meet statutory responsibilities. Senate Bill 340 would enhance the program's capacity to respond more quickly to complaints, expand outreach to underserved facilities, and increase public awareness of long-term care options and residents' rights.

Baltimore County is committed to advancing policies and practices that support residents across the lifespan, particularly those most vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and rights violations. Senate Bill 340 strengthens a proven, resident-centered oversight model that is essential to ensuring dignity, safety, and accountability in long-term care.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 340** from the Senate Finance Committee. For more information, please contact **Kayenda Twesigye, State Legislative Officer of Government Affairs**, at ktwesigye@baltimorecountymd.gov.