



COMMISSION ON AGING

TESTIMONY ON SB0340 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Nursing Facilities – Medicaid Quality Assessment – Funding of Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

TO: Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and members of the Finance Committee
FROM: Linda Bergofsky, Co-Chair, Montgomery County Commission on Aging

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging (CoA) in support of SB0340—Nursing Facilities – Medicaid Quality Assessment – Funding of Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman. The CoA was established by Montgomery County in 1974 pursuant to a requirement of the Federal Older Americans Act of 1965, that there be an Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging. In that role, the CoA serves as an advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of the County's 240,000 older residents at the local, State, and National levels. This legislation addresses a long-standing priority of the Commission and its constituents —ensuring that vulnerable older adults who reside in nursing homes receive high quality care in safe environments that preserve the rights of all residents.

The Maryland Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program — along with Federal and State regulations and periodic inspections by the State — make up the three pillars essential to ensuring quality of care in nursing homes. The Maryland Long-term Care Ombudsman Program has just two State staff responsible for training, policy and procedures, community education, and legislative advocacy and engagement on behalf of the program.

The proposed increase in funds for the Maryland Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, beginning in fiscal year 2027 of a minimum of 3% of the special funds collected through the Nursing Home Quality Assessment, will strengthen the ability of the Ombudsman Program to meet its federal responsibilities under the Older Americans Act; support County programs as they recruit and train staff and volunteers; and provide an essential safeguard for Maryland's most vulnerable older adults and their families. We need this legislation to maintain the extraordinary level of service delivered by staff and volunteer Ombudsmen across the State.

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging respectfully urges the return of a Favorable decision and report on SB0340.

Linda Bergofsky
Co-Chair, Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Department of Health and Human Services

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436