
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 493
Nursing Facilities - Involuntary Discharge or Transfer
Finance Committee
February 24, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change (SWASC) strongly supports SB 493, which will protect patients during nursing home discharges by requiring nursing homes to provide adequate notice and comprehensive planning before discharging a resident.

Unsafe, unplanned, and inadequate discharges of nursing home residents are a serious issue in the United States and Maryland. Some of the most vulnerable among us – elderly individuals with dementia, stroke patients who cannot speak, and patients who are wheelchair-bound – have been left on the side of the street with no protection and notification.

Nationally, nursing home “dumping” is a harmful practice that has impacted thousands of individuals and families. Inadequate discharge planning and improper eviction from nursing home facilities was listed nationally as one of the top five complaints under the National Ombudsman Reporting System, with over 14,000 formal complaints filed nationwide.¹ The Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General 2024 report identified nationally that nursing homes often failed to provide documentation that “the receiving facility could provide services that meet residents’ needs” and residents were often not notified of their discharge – conditions that directly undermine safe transitions.²

This practice is well-documented within Maryland. The 2018 court case *State of Maryland v. Neiswanger Management Services* highlighted the seriousness of this issue in Maryland.³ This case documented unlawful discharges from nursing homes without planning, notice, or communication to families. Local reporting by WBAL-TV 11 identified one example of this where Vonda Wagner alleges that after experiencing a stroke that left her unable to speak, she was discharged from her nursing facility due to insurance noncoverage and moved to an “unlicensed assisted living facility which eventually dumped her on a downtown street” and is quoted saying “I couldn’t scream for help.”⁴

Our direct experiences working with vulnerable adults underscore the need for greater protections. Sadly, experiences like Vonda Wagner's are not uncommon. As students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, we are employed or placed in practicum sites in which we have directly witnessed patient dumping outside of homeless shelters, at old addresses, or at facilities that cannot adequately meet patients’ needs. One member of our coalition recalls a client who had numerous

inadequately planned discharges. These practices not only endanger patients and traumatize families, but also violate core social work principles of justice, dignity, and protection of vulnerable populations.

SB 493 would help prevent these unsafe discharges by requiring nursing homes to provide adequate notice, proper documentation, and more comprehensive discharge planning for medically vulnerable residents. This legislation represents a necessary step toward ensuring that Maryland residents receive safe and ethical care during one of the most vulnerable transitions of their lives.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 493.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹ Administration for Community Living. (2022). *National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS) data: Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program complaint.*

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General. (2024). *Facility-initiated discharges from nursing homes: CMS should improve oversight and enforcement (OEI-01-18-00251).*

³ Public Justice Center. (n.d.). Attorney General can sue nursing homes for patient dumping, Court of Appeals rules.

⁴ WBAL-TV 11. (2019, March 1). *NMS nursing homes banned from Maryland for alleged patient dumping.*