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Frederick County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Chair
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February 17th, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle, Chair
The Honorable Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB0488: The Sue Hecht Continuing Care Retirement Community Transparency Act

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and esteemed members of the Finance Committee,

During the 2025 Legislative Session, former Delegate Sue Hecht (January 1995-January 2003 and January 2007-2011) contacted me about a several-year process, largely hidden from residents, to install and impose a culture of fundamentalist religious practices into all aspects of resident life at Homewood Living Frederick. She encouraged me to meet with a group of residents as soon as Session ended.

These new policies infringed on residents' rights on a number of levels, including imposing a religious test to qualify for board membership. The new policies conflicted with the tolerant environment that residents expected when signing a contract and available in advertising on the organization's website. **These concerns are articulated in great detail in Exhibit I, a letter from Attorney Timothy Maloney to Attorney General Anthony Brown on the behalf of a large group of Homewood Living Frederick residents.**

After numerous meetings with residents, and a meeting with Homewood's Executive Director and CEO, (Homewood's leadership subsequently refused to meet with us and residents) we reached out to Maryland Continuing Care Residents' Association (MaCCRA) for guidance, assistance, and support.

Through extensive conversations as well as a Homewood's effort to "pass the buck" to the parent organization, it became obvious that there is a very grey area as to who the 'provider' is in State law. Thus, we requested clarification from the Attorney General's office as to whether Homewood Living Frederick (HF) or its parent, Homewood Living Ministries (HLM), is the provider. This understanding is critical in determining both decision-making and accountability.

As you will note in Exhibit II, the advisory letter provides little guidance on this issue. Thus, we found it necessary to provide clarification through legislation.

While on the surface both the major impetus for this legislation, and related incidents from other CCRC's is about transparency, effective communication, inclusivity, and tolerance; it seemed necessary to provide clarity on the topic of ultimate responsibility.

We are very aware of concerns regarding unintended consequences and the fiscal note in the bill as it is currently written. We are working closely with members from the Department of Aging to amend the bill in a manner that will provide a more effective path towards ensuring that our seniors, who choose to spend their golden years in CCRCs, are guaranteed that they will live in a tolerant, transparent, well-informed environment that respects Maryland and federal laws.

I urge a favorable report with amendments.

Sincerely,

Karen Lewis Young

Senator Karen Lewis Young

Exhibit II

Maloney, Timothy. “RE: Ongoing Violations of Maryland Law at Homewook Living Frederick.” *Joseph Greenwald Lake.* Received by Attorney General Anthony Brown, February 10, 2026.

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February 10, 2026

Hon. Anthony G. Brown
Attorney General of Maryland
200 Saint Paul Place
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: Ongoing Violations of Maryland Law
at Homewood Living Frederick

Dear Attorney General Brown:

I am writing this letter on behalf of concerned residents of Homewood Living Frederick (HF or Homewood), a continuing care retirement community. In a years-long process largely hidden from residents, Homewood and its parent company, Homewood Living Ministries (HLM) installed a fundamentalist management that has sought to impose its culture and beliefs on the residents, the majority of whom do not share this particular faith.

In violation of Maryland law, HF and HLM have interfered with the residents' statutory right to board membership by imposing a religious test to membership. HF eliminated "sexual orientation" from its nondiscrimination statement and has sought to control a gay organization being formed on campus, and it has refused (failed?) to attract new gay residents to Homewood. The fundamentalist branding has extended to every aspect of resident life. Residents cannot check menus without first pushing an app with a cross logo. When calling for information, residents and outside callers who are placed on hold are forced to listen to pre-recorded religious messages.

These changes were prepared in secret over three or four years. Many residents are Christian, but do not share these fundamentalist beliefs. Other residents are Jewish or not affiliated with any religion. Most of the residents find these changes offensive. Many have said they would not have moved to HF if these changes had been disclosed. Residents are particularly disturbed because HF deceptively advertised itself as "non-sectarian" until well into 2024, and they were falsely induced to come to Homewood based upon that deceptive representation.

These changes were so offensive that 315 residents signed a petition asking the HLM Board of Trustees to meet and discuss these changes. This petition and related grievance were rejected. The petition and grievance were organized by Committee for Promoting an Inclusive Environment ("PIE"). PIE now has approximately 340 residents on its mailing list. Signatories and mailing list members represent about half the independent living residents of HF. Since its inception, only seven people have asked to be removed from the PIE mailing list.

These changes are not just offensive. They violate Maryland law. As set forth in detail below, the conduct of Homewood's management violates Maryland's non-discrimination, landlord-tenant, consumer protection, continuing care laws, and the Maryland SAFE Act. The enforcement of these laws spans several agencies, including the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, the Department of Aging, and the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General.

It is difficult to believe that this could occur in the State of Maryland in 2026, but it has. Hundreds of Homewood residents can attest to it. Because the conduct here implicates multiple statutes and the jurisdiction of multiple regulators, there is a need for a single unified State government response to these issues in the form of investigation and action by the Office of the Attorney General.

The residents of Homewood invite you to meet with them to hear their concerns first-hand. Importantly, they request that your office open an investigation into the allegations in this letter, so that every resident of Homewood can be assured that their rights under Maryland law are protected.

Let me provide you with some background concerning what has occurred at Homewood.

a. Background.

Homewood is a continuing care retirement community (CCRC). Homewood is owned and managed by Homewood Living Frederick (HF) and its parent, Homewood Living Ministries (HLM).

There are 700 independent living residents at Homewood, with an additional 120 registered beds in its health care unit. The independent living residents include both renters who sign leases, and subscribers, who sign continuing care contracts.[1] While many renters and subscribers are Christian, many are not. And most of the Christians do not subscribe to the fundamentalist Christian beliefs of Homewood Living Ministries.

HF and HLM were founded by mainstream Christians, members of the United Church of Christ (UCC), to care for old people, especially members of the church. Over time, the enterprise grew to cover several sites and to provide housing and care for people of all faiths and none. The religious convictions of the founders were primarily held privately so that overtly religious symbols and practices, especially those of any one narrow set of beliefs, were largely absent from HF. Until as recently as 2023 and into 2024, HF described itself as "non-sectarian" and many residents entered the community with an explicit reliance on the promise that they were not entering a religious, or religion-focused, community.

Homewood was successfully operated for many years by Homewood Retirement Centers, Inc., the predecessor of HLM and its subsidiaries, including HF, and has existed for a long time. HLM is the parent corporation of HF and four other retirement facilities in Maryland (1) and Pennsylvania (3). In 2018, the HLM Board of Trustees voted to eliminate its affiliation with UCC and in 2019 filed a document with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) removing its affiliation with the UCC as Homewood Retirement Centers, Inc

HLM abruptly and without notice severed its relationship with the United Church of Christ in 2019, after decades of UCC involvement. HLM's new CEO, with the

[1] According to the Homewood executive director, slightly less than half the Independent Living residents of HF rent their living quarters from HF and do not have continuing care contracts. This would be approximately 300 people.

support of the Board of Trustees of HLM, began the process of converting HLM and HF into a narrowly fundamentalist institution through changes to its charter, mission statement, symbols, written and oral messaging, and the imposition of a religious test for certain staff and board positions. The religious tests, by their own terms, exclude almost the entire population of HF. These changes were adopted largely in secret and were not made known to most residents of HF in their entirety, if indeed everything has now been revealed, until early 2025. In this religious takeover, HLM and HF have violated several laws, including the Maryland Fair Housing Act, the Maryland Consumer Protection Act and the Maryland Continuing Care Act.

The actions of the Board of Trustees of HLM, the Board of Directors of HF, and corporate leadership over the past seven years indicate a clear intention to change the focus of the continuing care community at Homewood at Frederick and at its other subsidiary corporations from a nonsectarian organization where religion played little role in daily life or policy at HF, except as individual residents chose to exercise their individual beliefs, to one with a fundamentalist evangelical religious orientation that is now described as the primary purpose of the corporations.

HLM described these major changes as “rebranding.” HF and HLM did not inform the residents of HF and those applying to move to HF of their intent, and in some cases hid that intent, in violation of Maryland law. In carrying out their religious intent, HF and HLM have violated and continue to violate the rights of residents and laws enacted to protect them.

On October 12, 2023, HLM (then known as Homewood Retirement Centers) voted to change its Charter/Articles of Incorporation and its rules regarding its requirements for any person to be a board member on its Board of Trustees or any of the Subsidiary Boards of Directors. These changes were consistent with the new fundamentalist approach to governing Homewood. The Articles of Amendment and Restatement provided that “the primary purpose of the Corporation is to serve the body of Christ through the creation and management of senior living communities and services. Additionally, these communities and services will reflect the love of Christ in His desire that all people place their faith in Him unto salvation and bear fruit that builds the Kingdom of God.” These Articles were not recorded with SDAT until 16 months later, on February 5, 2025.

No formal or written notice of these October 12, 2023, changes to the Charter/Articles of Incorporation was provided to the vast majority of the then current residents/subscribers at HF. Indeed, the corporate changes were not filed with SDAT until February 5, 2025. Most of the community did not learn about these changes until one resident noticed the SDAT filing online and publicized it at the February 25, 2025, residents meeting.

No notice of the October 2023 corporate changes by Homewood Retirement Centers or Homewood at Frederick or the corporate name changes of HLM in December 2024 were provided to applicants seeking to move to HF until sometime in 2025 after some of the applicants had signed continuing care contracts in 2024 and moved into their residence.

Maryland's continuing care law requires that the Provider "shall make available to subscribers either the nonconfidential portions of the minutes of each meeting of the governing body or a summary of the nonconfidential portions of the minutes, within 1 month of approval of the minutes." HS §10-427(c). Additionally, the law requires that "at least quarterly," the Provider "shall hold a meeting open to all subscribers, at which the Provider "shall summarize, the provider's operations, significant changes from the previous year, and goals and objectives for the next year." HS §10-426.The minutes of the October 12, 2023, corporate Board of Trustees meeting approving these changes should have been promptly disclosed to residents. But no such information was provided until February of 2025 at the earliest. Additionally, these significant changes should have been disclosed at the quarterly meetings at the end of 2023, and in subsequent Disclosure Statements but were not. There is no information that was provided by HF as to any board of directors' actions taken regarding any of the above corporate actions, so at this point the HF Board of Directors may not have adopted any of the HLM corporate actions for all the residents may know.

In December 2024, the parent corporation changed its name to Homewood Living Ministries (HLM) and recorded that name change with SDAT. This also was done without notice to the residents/subscribers of HF or applicants pending admission. The 2023 corporate changes to the parent charter/articles of incorporation included a longer and different statement of corporate intent than the one sentence mission statement adopted for purposes of qualifying as a 501(c)(3) corporation under Federal tax laws and the mission statement included in the legally mandated disclosure statement to residents and prospective residents. The language is materially different from what appeared in the April 2024 Disclosure Statement and the October 2023 Independent Living Resident Handbook.

The contrast is striking. The October 2023 Independent Living Handbook (the month of the parent corporate changes) that was provided to applicants had the Parent mission statement as "[t]he mission of Homewood Retirement Centers is to establish and operate retirement centers for older persons; to provide compassionate professional, and caring services; and to enhance the quality of life for residents, clients, and coworkers." There was no reference to any religious affiliation or orientation of HF in that document or any mention of the October 2023 changes to the Charter, Articles of Incorporation, or board rules despite the fact that the HLM board and possibly the HF board and executive leadership had adopted those changes, they were concealed and omitted from the Disclosure Statement, and not disclosed until early 2025.

Indeed, HLM and HF concealed these changes from prospective residents. In an April 2024 version of the Continuing Care Residency Agreement that was signed by two applicants, the contract contained the following materially false statements: "Homewood at Frederick is a continuing care retirement community …. Homewood is not affiliated with any religious organization. Homewood's parent is Homewood Retirement Centers, Inc. (Parent), and Homewood is also thus further affiliated with its Parent's subsidiary companies (Subsidiaries). The Parent and Subsidiaries are non-profit organizations based in Maryland and Pennsylvania."

The concerned residents do not care what any person's religious beliefs are, as that is an entirely private matter. They object because HLM and HF are attempting to force their religious beliefs and practices upon HF residents, and because the practices of these organizations violate Maryland law. We will detail those violations.

b. HLM and HF's ongoing violations of Maryland law.

1. Homewood has violated the Maryland discrimination laws by employing a religious test to exclude almost all subscriber residents from a position as director on HF Board of Directors.

Maryland law requires that if a provider has a governing body, "at least one of the providers subscribers shall be a full and regular member of the governing body." HS §10-417(a)(1). The legislative purpose of this requirement is to ensure independent subscriber representation on the board.

Homewood, however, has employed a religious test to exclude nearly all subscribers from board membership. Homewood requires adherence to Homewood Living Ministries' mission "to honor Christ through faithful service to seniors and one another." More specifically, Homewood has adopted written policies requiring new Board members to pray for the organization, to serve as "guardian of the Mission to Honor Christ," and to "honor Christ through faithful service to seniors and one another."

These requirements are embodied in an adopted policy captioned "Board Members' Commitment to Homewood," which includes the following requirements:

> As a board member of Homewood Retirement Communities, I understand and commit to the following:
> *1.* I will regularly pray for the organization during and outside of board meetings, including the team, board decisions, and my contributions as a board member.
> *2.* I will serve as a guardian of the Mission to honor Christ through the organization and will seek to protect and advance the mission and values of:
> Mission: Honor Christ through faithful service to seniors and one another.
> Core Values: Compassion, Gratitude, Humility, and Integrity.

The Maryland Fair Housing Act makes it the public policy of the State to provide fair housing regardless of religion. SG §20-702(a)(1). The Act prohibits "discriminatory practices with respect to residential housing." SG §20-702(a)(2). The Fair Housing Act expressly prohibits "discrimination against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of the sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling" based upon religions. SG §20-705(b)(2).

Homewood's religious test for board membership clearly violates the Maryland Fair Housing Act. Homewood attempts to justify its discriminatory restriction by citing the Continuing Care Act language that subscriber members shall be "selected according to the same general written standards and criteria used to select other members of the governing body." HS §10-427(a)(4). But this language cannot authorize plainly discriminatory restrictions that are prohibited by state law. The Maryland Fair Housing Act is a broad remedial act which expresses the clear public policy of the State against discrimination based upon religion. Any provision in Homewood's governing documents to the contrary violates the Fair Housing Act, is unenforceable, and void as against public policy.

2. Homewood has openly discriminated against gay residents.

Homewood is, of course, subject to Maryland laws prohibiting discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Yet in its April 2025 Disclosure Statement mandated by state law, Homewood omitted any reference to non-discrimination based upon sexual orientation. It pledged non-discrimination against all protected classes except sexual orientation, which were omitted, even though that language is contained in the same law prohibiting discrimination against all protected classes:

> [I]t is the policy of Homewood that no person (including but not limited to a resident, prospective resident, employee, prospective employee, volunteer, consultant or visitor) shall be subject on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap or national origin to discrimination in the terms or conditions for admission to, employment, or the provision of services at Homewood.

Homewood has demonstrated open hostility to gay residents. A clear example of this occurred when a gay resident tried to start a club for LGBTQ+ members. After securing a date and room from the Program Coordinator, the resident contacted the resident volunteer on the Tech Committee who posts club descriptions on the app calendar. In this case, the description was posted, but the Director of Activities deleted it almost immediately, without notice to the person who was starting the club.

The volunteer states that over the course of approximately two years, she wrote and posted descriptions of approximately 45 clubs, five or six of which were new. The gay residents' club description was the only one ever deleted. After some discussion between the gay resident and HF representatives, it appeared that the Director of Activities had removed the posting at the direction of the Associate Executive Director, pending a meeting with the Executive Director.

The original club description included the possibility of the club having a table at the 2026 Frederick Pride event. The Associate Executive Director expressed concern that doing so might suggest that HF/HLM might appear to be supporting something it doesn't support. When later given the opportunity to disclaim in writing his earlier oral statement, the Associate Executive Director did not do so. The mention of participation in the Pride event was removed from the description, and the club was reinstated to the activities calendar. In a later series of emails, the Associate Executive Director stated that it would not be acceptable for the LGBTQ+ groups to claim identification with Homewood by using its "marketing and design elements," which were later defined to include merely using its name. Yet no other club or organization at Homewood has been subject to this restriction or limitation upon its speech.

This discrimination against gay residents has only increased, with management now openly threatening retaliation against a gay resident for exercising his right to protected speech. On November 6, 2025, the HLM CEO wrote to a gay resident indicating he was violating community guidelines and policies by continuing his efforts to get management and other groups within Homewood to fully recognize the religious equality of the LGBTQ+ community. The community guidelines in question include those prohibiting residents from criticizing HF or HLM or, apparently, openly trying to convince others of the validity of a legally protected category and position, a classic form of protected political speech.

The CEO has repeatedly stated that the terms of the resident Handbook will be enforced: the only method of enforcement under the contracts with residents is termination of the contract and eviction. The right of residents to express their opinions as they see fit does not, according to the Resident Handbook and the CEO of HLM, exist at HF. HF and HLM have established certain narrow and restrictive channels of communication and have done their utmost to convince residents that they cannot express opinions in any other way, regardless of statutory and constitutional protections to the contrary.

A recently hired chaplain at another HLM site delivered a sermon containing explicitly homophobic statements. Reports of this event, the truth of which was confirmed, became widely known at HF and caused widespread consternation among HF residents, both LGBTQ+ and not. This type of derogatory language from the pulpit is perhaps not surprising because HLM has practiced widespread discrimination in hiring, for instance hiring only chaplains who sign their pledge to adhere to the fundamentalist tenets of their faith.

A straight Homewood resident, who was upset by the bad turn HLM and HF have taken, wrote to Thad Rothrock, the CEO of HLM who is visibly and actively involved in the affairs of HF, to ask why there had been no statement from HF or HLM making it clear that homophobic messages from an employee of HLM are unacceptable or at least stating that homophobic messages are not in keeping with HF or HLM values or Maryland law. His response was that HLM does not discuss personnel matters. There was no response from him when it was pointed out that the issue was not what was discussed privately with the employee.

It is important to note that while some of the events involve the LGBTQ+ activist, they impact every resident of Homewood, as well as potential residents. The open discrimination has disturbed many straight Homewood residents who do not want and did not sign up and invest their money to live in a facility whose management practices illegal discrimination. They too are in the same life situation as gay residents. They have made the same significant life changes expecting HF and HLM to be open and welcoming to all who seek to move to HF and are affected by the discriminatory practices of HF and HLM. The HF demographic is a well-educated group that votes and has voted for legislators who have established that discrimination is repugnant and illegal. It is absolutely no surprise that residents so vigorously object to the discriminatory practices of HF and HLM.

The Maryland Fair Housing Act expressly prohibits “discrimination against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of the sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling” based upon sexual orientation. SG §20-705(b)(2). Additionally, the Maryland

Continuing Care Act required providers to guarantee in their continuing care contracts "that subscribers have the right to organize and operate a subscriber association at the facility and to meet privately to conduct business." HS §10-444(b)(15).

The CEO's statement to the gay resident threatening to enforce handbook penalties for protected speech plainly violates the anti-coercion and retaliation provisions of Maryland's discrimination laws. SG §20-707(c) provides that a "person may not coerce, intimidate, threaten, interfere with, or retaliate against any person because a person has aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of any right granted or protected by this subtitle." The CEO's threat of handbook penalties was clearly calculated to intimidate and coerce the resident into not speaking up about Homewood's treatment of gay residents.

3. Homewood is now openly threatening residents who organize and speak out about Homewood's policies and has adopted rules and regulations which explicitly prohibit and punish dissent by residents.

Homewood residents have organized tenant groups to protest management's open hostility to free speech, freedom of religion, and Homewood's gay residents. In response, management has adopted policies and contractual language designed to intimidate free speech and organization by Homewood's residents. This conduct plainly violates Maryland law.

Most Homewood residents became aware of the religious takeover of HF and the ramifications of it in early 2025. There was widespread and vocal unhappiness with the changes, the way they occurred and the way the community was notified.

There were at least two large meetings in 2025 at which the CEO made presentations about the changes and attempted to justify them. Because the CEO refused to take questions from residents with the microphone on so everyone could hear the questions and answers and engage in any open exchange of views, many residents expressed their feelings by booing or groaning when they believed the CEO was misrepresenting facts.

On June 10, 2025, a new resident handbook was issued, the terms of which are incorporated by reference into residents' contracts. Many new provisions aimed at prohibiting and punishing dissent were included. Residents are now forbidden to:

-make negative or disparaging comments or media posts about Homewood or its staff
-disrupt Homewood business operations or sales and marketing efforts (this is because of a planned demonstration on public property that never took place)
-solicit funds or signatures (except for constitutionally protected political petitions)
-Conduct membership drives for resident organizations (after one group, HAF MaCCRA did exactly that)
-distribute literature
-distribute gifts
-offer to sell merchandise or services (no tee shirts)
-post or leave written information on bulletin boards, information racks or tabletops
-post or distribute photographs, notices or other materials on any HF property

In addition, the resident handbook contains at least eight separate new provisions regulating speech that reference such concepts as "quiet enjoyment," the meaning of which HF and HLM have perverted to limit any expression of dissatisfaction with Homewood management except through certain limited and dead-end channels. HF is explicit that the new handbook rules apply to both renters and subscribers. As noted, the only penalties for violating the handbook include eviction (for tenants) and contract termination and resultant eviction (for subscribers).

In response to the changes made by management at Homewood, three groups of residents were organized and meet regularly. Each is a "tenant organization" within the meaning of RP 8-219.[2] The three groups are:

[2] Specifically, each group consists of three or more tenants who reside at Homewood who have organized for the purpose of improving the living conditions, contractual position and community experience of the residence. Each group meets regularly, operates democratically and is independent of the ownership and management. HF meets the definition of "apartment facility" because it is one complex with one owner offering accommodations for rent.

-HAF-MaCCRA, the HF chapter of MaCCRA, the statewide organization representing the interests of residents of CCRCs. HAF-MaCCRA has 190 paid members at Homewood.
-A committee of HAF-MaCCRA, the committee for Promoting an Inclusive Environment ("PIE"). PIE has approximately 340 residents on its mailing list, up from the 315 residents who signed the petition rejected by HLM asking that the Board of Trustees meet with HF residents. Since its inception, only seven people have asked to be removed from the PIE mailing list.
-the Regulatory Analysis Team, a small group composed of Homewood residents with experience analyzing laws and regulations.

In addition to the Tenant Organizations, HF has a resident association, as authorized by CCRC Law, called the Willow Road Residents Association, Inc. ("WRRA") of which all Independent Living residents are members. As noted, Maryland's continuing care law provides that "…subscribers have the right to organize and operate a subscriber association at the facility and to meet privately to conduct business." HS §10-444(b)(15).

The current HF Disclosure Statement notes that the WRRA is separately incorporated and a registered 501(c)(3). It describes it as "an independent unit, limited only by our legal obligations to Homewood, reserving the right to make independent decisions" and is described as a forum for residents to express their concerns, which are to be provided to management.

Homewood management has threatened to evict residents for such activities as criticizing Homewood, engaging in membership drives, participating in Tenant Organizations or similar tenant and/or resident organizations, etc., as set forth above. HF's only remedy for violations of their contracts with residents, including violations of the handbook rules, is termination of the contract and/or eviction.

HF and HLM have specifically and repeatedly stated, in meetings, in small group conversations and in writing, that the contracts will be enforced and residents who speak out may be asked to leave. The Communication section of the handbook states: "Failure to comply with any of the rules or guidelines in the resident contract or this handbook may result in termination of the resident contract." The General Rules and Guidelines section contains the following: "Residents who disrupt the peace and harmony of the campus may be asked to leave." HF and HLM clearly conflate expressions of dissent with management policy as disruption of peace and harmony.

HLM's corporate attorney sent a letter to the attorney representing HAF-MaCCRA that stated, referencing the CEO of HLM being booed at two meetings: "…please advise your clients that future outbursts and disruptions will not be tolerated and that HLF [HF] intends to enforce the Communication Guidelines and General Rules as written in the Handbook. Specifically, future violations of the guidelines and rules may necessitate termination of the resident contracts of those individuals that continue to disrupt future meetings." The exchange continued with HLM's attorney saying he would instruct his client to "take names."

Like the requirement for continuing care resident groups, tenant organizations shall have the right to assemble in a meeting room within an apartment facility designated for use by tenants for events and community gatherings during reasonable hours and on reasonable notice to the landlord. RP 8-219(b)(1). A landlord may not evict or threaten to evict a tenant because the tenant "has participated in any tenant organization." RP §8-208.1(a)(2)

Under Maryland law, a continuing care agreement may not "allow dismissal or discharge of the subscriber from the facility providing care before the agreement expires unless the provider has just cause for the dismissal or discharge." HS §10-448(a)(1). Expressing dissent over management policies is not just cause for discharge from a continuing care contract.

4. HF is imposing its religious beliefs on residents who do not share those beliefs.

Homewood is required by statute to conduct meetings of subscribers "at least quarterly" to summarize the provider's options, answer subscriber's questions, and, at least annually, to summarize internal grievances that have been filed. HS §10-426. At these, and other, meetings, the Homewood CEO has sometimes insisted on "praying in the name of Jesus Christ" while convening the meeting, even after being informed by Jewish residents and those of other persuasions that his prayer during the resident meetings was objectionable and violative of their own religious beliefs. These residents were forced to sit through his public prayers in order to obtain information Homewood is required by law to provide to all residents. When asked not to pray, the CEO said that he was going to pray and that the Board of Trustees of HLM wanted him to pray. If that statement is true, then the individual members of the HLM Board of Trustees are individually and personally complicit in this violation of law.

Similarly, Homewood has discriminated against its residents in their living conditions by imposing upon them a "director of ministry development" whose tasks include "fostering partnerships with other Christian ministries" and "expanding our Christian programs and event offerings." This appointment has coincided with an increase of Christian programming at HF weighted toward fundamentalist beliefs, such as a gospel cruise, a trip to the Bible Museum and a new Bible study program, complete with free books, where such director has reportedly claimed that he "speaks for God." This is a blasphemous statement to mainstream Christians, and it was not made by an individual resident expressing his personal beliefs, but by an employee of HLM carrying out his assigned duties in an activity organized and sponsored by HF and/or HLM.

Significantly, there has been no increase in corporate-sponsored programming or events aimed at other religious views or not religion-focused, leading to a definite shift in the "feel" of community life at Homewood. HLM, which completely controls all aspects of HF but does not itself have direct senior care operations, states in its website that its programming is Christian--meaning its version of Christian--which is consistent with the proselytizing primary purpose set forth in its charter.

HF has embedded its religious beliefs into all aspects of life at Homewood, forcing nonbelievers to implicitly participate in those beliefs. For instance, a Jew or nonbeliever cannot open the HF app to find out what's for lunch without first touching the cross embedded in the HF logo. Any person put on hold by an HF receptionist must listen to an HF religious message to receive whatever information they are seeking. Residents are transported to campus facilities and outside events in shuttles which advertise HF's religious beliefs.

The Fair Housing Act expressly prohibits "discrimination against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of the sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling" based upon religions. SG §20-705(b)(2). Clearly, there is blatant religious discrimination in the delivery of services and facilities at Homewood, which is dominated by the fundamentalist viewpoint in nearly all aspects of resident life.

5. Homewood is engaged in ongoing consumer protection violations.

Maryland's consumer protection laws prohibit unfair, abusive and deceptive trade practices. The Maryland Consumer Protection Act applies to Homewood. "[Unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practices include any [f]alse, falsely disparaging, or misleading oral or written statement, visual description, or other representation of any kind which has the capacity, tendency, or effect of deceiving or misleading consumers." CL §13-301(1) These include the "[f]ailure to state a material fact if the failure deceives or tends to deceive." CL §13-301(3).

Prohibited conduct also includes deception, misrepresentation or knowing concealment, suppression, or omission of any material fact with the intent that the consumer rely on it in connection with the promotion of any consumer realty or consumer service. CL §13-302 provides that any practice prohibited by the Consumer Protection Act is a violation, whether any consumer in fact has been misled, deceived or damaged as a result of the practice or not.

The Maryland Consumer Protection Act requirements must be read together with the Disclosure Statement requirements applicable to Homewood in the Continuing Care Community Act. As a continuing care community sponsor, Homewood is required to provide a Disclosure Statement to all prospective subscribers, and annually to all subscribers who request them. HS §10-424. Revisions to disclosure statements must be provided annually to subscribers whether they request one or not. HS §10-425(b)(3). The statutorily required contents of the Disclosure Statement are broad and cover nearly every aspect of the Provider's operations. Id.

Finally, the Maryland SAFE Act prohibits financial exploitation of older adults with "deception, false pretenses, false promises…or similar actions: to obtain their assets or property. E&T 13-601(E). In this case, older Marylanders paid entrance fees of up to $541,000 or more based upon the knowingly false representation that Homewood was a "non-sectarian" community.

The Homewood Disclosure Statement contains numerous false or misleading statements or material omissions, and/or statements which fail to meet the Disclosure Statement requirements of the Continuing Care Act. These include the following:

Governance. The Disclosure Statement is required to contain a description of the Provider's form of governance. Homewood's Disclosure statement suggests to the average reader that it is primarily governed by the HF Board of Directors and the executive directors. This is misleading, because available information indicates the HF Board is advisory only, and decisions are actually made by the HLM Board of Trustees. According to both the executive director of HF and HLM HF's annual IRS Form 990, individuals who describe themselves as employees of HF are in fact employees of HLM. Even the most minute details of day-to-day operations are subject to review and approval by the corporate level management of HLM.

Board Representation. The Disclosure Statement inaccurately states that the resident director on the board is the president of Willow Road Residents Association (WRRA). This is no longer a true statement. The CEO of HLM recently met with the WRRA leadership and requested changes in the WRRA bylaws to remove the requirement that the resident member of the HF Board of Directors be recommended by the WRRA. In fact, the most recent member of the HF Board of Directors recommended to the HLM Board of Trustees for selection was chosen by the CEO of HLM without the input or recommendation of the WRRA. The WRRA was unable to identify any subscriber who would sign the HLM religious test required to become a director of HF. The CEO of HLM recently informed the President of the WRRA that the resident director will no longer be deemed a representative of the residents of HF. The subscribers of HF have no formal voice or vote in the management of HF or HLM.

Financial Statement. The Provider is required by law to include in the Disclosure Statement "a copy of the most recent certified financial statement obtainable under generally accepted accounting principles [GAAP]." HS §10-425(a)(12).GAAP-compliant financial statements including, among other things, balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements. The Disclosure Statement includes only a two-page summary statement which is not GAAP-compliant and does not comply with HS §10-425(a)(12).

Additionally, only the consolidated HLM financial statement is presented in the Disclosure Statement. As a result, neither prospective nor current residents can analyze thoroughly the financial condition of HF or of Homewood Living Williamsport, its sister subsidiary and other member of the Obligated Group, even though HF is jointly responsible for the obligations of both subsidiary organizations.

For instance, the only cash flow information provided for HF was for the past 12 months prior to December 31, 2023, but was otherwise provided only for the Parent Corporation and its subsidiaries as a group for past years but not for future years for HF, the provider for future years.

Residents Association. The Provider is required by law to provide "a description of the role of any resident association" in the Disclosure Statement. HS §10-425(a)(23). The Disclosure Statement misleadingly states that WRRA is "independent, "self-governing: and includes language suggesting that it makes independent decisions and that it represents the interests and concerns of residents. This description is misleading because HLM management has attempted to utilize the WRRA as part of its enforcement actions. Additionally, HLM Management has interfered with this independence, attempting to coerce WRRA to change its bylaws and procedures to accommodate HLM's decision-making, including permitting HLM to choose who will represent the residents on the board of directors.

Internal Grievance Procedures. As required by HS §10-425(a)(24), the Disclosure Statement must contain the required description of the internal grievance procedure. But this description is misleading because it fails to disclose that HF and HLM have attempted to bar protests and complaints made outside HF and HLM-approved channels and made such protests punishable by cancellation of subscriber and/or rental contracts. Nothing in the Continuing Care statute requires the internal grievance procedure to be exclusive or authorizes the HF or HLM to interfere with residents' constitutionally protected right to free speech.

Fundamental Governance. Disclosure Statements as recently as the April 2023 version stated simply that the Provider was a nonsectarian organization. HF continued to describe itself as "non-sectarian" well into 2024, when this was obviously untrue. Similar statements were made in the Disclosure Statements issued prior to 2019, when HLM ended its affiliation with the United Church of Christ. The CEO of HLM told representatives of the Maryland Department of Aging in a meeting that HF was both a religious organization and provider of senior housing and care, but that information was not shared with residents or applicants until early 2025. Indeed, it is unclear that HLM/HF have even to date disclosed to residents that they consider themselves a religious organization or affiliated with one.

Although the conversion to a fundamentalist governance and program was secretly underway by 2019-2020, neither prospective residents nor residents were informed of most of the changes until more than five years later in 2025. HF and HLM continue to falsely tell the residents that “nothing has changed” and “it doesn’t matter.” That those statements are not true is evidenced by the signing of a petition by 315 residents asking to meet with the HLM Board of Trustees because they disapproved of these changes when they finally found out about them, by the continuing protests; and the obvious changes in the living experience at HF. At least one resident, in a post-move-in satisfaction survey, said that the couple felt they were the victims of fraud on the part of HF.

The following statement from one resident is typical: “When I was thinking about moving to Homewood, I asked the marketing person I dealt with about the affiliation with the UCC and whether HF was overtly religious or whether religious views played a big part in life at HF. I was told that no, the connection to the UCC had ended some time ago and there wasn’t any religious emphasis at HF. She told me HF was non-sectarian, that there were all kinds of people and everyone just went about their own business. I asked if there were any plans to change that. She said “no.” The mission statement set forth in the Resident Handbook, which said it had been revised in October 2023, had no mention of religion: “The mission of Homewood Retirement Centers is to establish and operate retirement centers for older persons; to provide compassionate, professional, and caring services; and to enhance the quality of life for residents, clients, and coworkers.””

This was in very late 2023, after the Board of Trustees of Homewood Retirement Centers had approved the religious changes to their charter consistent with the new fundamentalist management approach. No information was provided to pending applicants or residents/subscribers about the October 12, 2023, Corporation Board action or any HF Board action to separate from the United Church of Christ that the Homewood Retirement Centers Board of Trustees approved in 2018 and occurred in 2019 with the recording of that change in SDAT.

On the contrary, HF provided statements regarding Homewood Retirement Centers that one reasonably could conclude confirmed that it was not an affiliated religious organization despite the October 2023 corporate decision by the Homewood Retirement Centers' Board of Trustees and the future December 2024 change of its name to Homewood Living Ministries (HLM) that would have been known to corporate leadership and board members well in advance of December 2024. These were not shared with existing residents, nor were they disclosed to pending applicants prior to signing continuing care contracts, which are typically accompanied by a large entrance fee. The published entrance fee for some properties now exceeds $1,000,000.

Numerous residents have said they would not have moved to Homewood if they had known that a fundamentalist management existed which was seeking to create a culture steeped in their particular religious beliefs. As one resident who inquired about religious affiliation before signing the continuing care contract stated, "I had asked because I wasn't interested in living in a community that was religion-oriented in any way. I would never have moved to HF if I had been told the truth about what they were doing and what they planned." There are many residents with similar stories who believe they were lied to and who strongly object to the changes.

By failing to notify its residents of these changes, HF and HLM obtained monies, arguably, under false pretenses from those who could have decided to move out of HF because of the corporation changes and receive refunds. The then current subscribers, including new subscribers, were entitled to know about these changes, as they had the right under their continuing care contracts and rental agreements to leave at any time, and some who came in when Homewood was nonsectarian or was not affiliated with a religious organization might have wanted to leave after the October 12, 2023 corporate action was taken if they had been made aware of it. It would seem unlikely that the Maryland Consumer Protection laws would not at least require notice of changes to the organization that was a signatory to a contract where the rights of parties under those contracts could be impacted by those organizational changes. If there is no violation of existing law, there should be consideration of legislative changes to address this issue.

Equal Housing Opportunity. The current Resident Handbook contains the following statement: "We are pledged to the letter and spirit of U.S. policy for the achievement of equal housing opportunity throughout the Nation. We encourage and support an affirmative advertising and marketing program in which there are no barriers to obtaining housing because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identification, marital status, or source of income."

The statement is also deceptive because it implies that HF and HLM conduct marketing targeted to protected groups. They do not, and after a WRRA representative and two representatives of the LGBTQ community met with management to request HF participate in affirmative advertising and marketing by, among other things, taking tables at various protected group festivals and events, HF declined to do so and indicated that there would be no such marketing in 2026. The concerned residents believe that fewer than a total of ten renters and subscribers of HF are Black, Latino or of Asian descent.

c. Conclusion.

The conditions at Homewood have become a major problem for many residents. These include the limitations on board membership to believers, the open discrimination against gay residents, and the threats of retaliatory evictions and terminations against residents who speak out against these clear violations of Maryland law.

The residents of Homewood earnestly request that you initiate an investigation into these ongoing violations of Maryland law. They sincerely invite you to come to Homewood and meet with the hundreds of residents who share these concerns. They are willing to provide any documentation needed by your office. These requests can be made directly to Steven Rideout (swrideout@aol.com) or Leslie Davis (lesliedavis2000@hotmail.com).

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH, GREENWALD & LAAKE, P.A.

By: Timothy F. Maloney

cc: Governor Wes Moore
Senate President William C. Ferguson, IV
Hon. Joseline Pena-Melnyk, House Speaker
Hon. Pamela G. Beidle, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Hon. Health A. Bagnall, Chair, House Health Committee
Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater
Members of the Frederick County Delegation
Members of the Frederick County Council
Mayor and Council of Frederick
Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary of Health
Secretary of Aging Carmel Roques

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF COUNSEL TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ANTHONY G. BROWN
Attorney General

December 17, 2025

The Honorable Karen Lewis Young
Maryland Senate
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Via email

The Honorable Kenneth P. Kerr
Maryland General Assembly
209 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Continuing Care Retirement Communities

Dear Senator Lewis Young and Delegate Kerr:

You have requested a letter of advice addressing whether the requirement in Human Services Article ("HS") § 10-427 to have a continuing care retirement community subscriber be a member of a provider's governing body applies to the governing body of a provider's parent entity where the parent entity has ultimate financial control of the provider. Specifically, you asked (1) whether the definition of "provider" in the continuing care law includes a parent corporation that effectively controls the financial affairs of the subsidiary nominal provider, and (2) whether the term "governing body" includes the board of directors, board of trustees, or similar group that directs the affairs of such a parent corporation. I think the answer to #1 is likely no, and the answer to #2 is possibly, but, in my view, the statute is ambiguous, and so I cannot be certain how a court would interpret the membership requirement.

Current law requires that if a continuing care provider has a governing body, then "at least one of the provider's subscribers shall be a full and regular member of the governing body." HS § 10-427(a). The purpose of this requirement is to give subscribers, i.e., residents, the opportunity to participate in the governance of a continuing care retirement community facility. *See* Testimony of Del. Dana Stein in Support of HB 938 of 2025.[1]

[1] https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2025/hgo/1cU37wAoWKXAUrcQXmkqa8yrHtbUW6jTg.pdf

You explained that sometimes a nominal provider entity is a subsidiary of a parent entity that has retained the legal authority to effectively control all major financial matters of the nominal provider. In such cases, you think that the parent entity's board is the true "governing body" and that, under HS § 10-427, the authorized resident positions should be on the board of the parent entity, as well as on the board of the subsidiary nominal provider. You have requested legal advice on whether the statutory definitions of "provider" and "governing body" support that conclusion.

This is a matter of statutory interpretation. "The primary purpose of statutory interpretation is 'to ascertain and effectuate the General Assembly's purpose and intent when it enacted the statute.'" *In re B.CD.*, 267 Md. App. 61, 83 (2025) (quoting *Vanderpool v. State*, 261 Md. App. 163, 180 (2024)). Statutory interpretation "begins with the text of the statute," *In re B.CD.*, 267 Md. App. at 83 , but courts do not examine the statutory text in isolation; instead, the judiciary reads the text "within the context of the statutory scheme to which it belongs," *In re K.K.*, 266 Md. App. 161, 180 (2025) (citations and internal quotation marks omitted). "If the language of the statute is unambiguous and clearly consistent with the statute's apparent purpose," the court's inquiry ends. *Comptroller of Maryland v. FC-GEN Operations Invs. LLC*, 482 Md. 343, 37980 (2022) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). But when a statute's words are susceptible to more than one reasonable interpretation, a court looks to other indicia of legislative intent, including the legislative history, the structure of the statute, its general purpose, how it relates to other laws, and the relative rationality and legal effect of competing constructions. *Id*. at 380. "In every case, the statute must be given a reasonable interpretation, not one that is absurd, illogical, or incompatible with common sense." *Id*.

The State's continuing care statute defines "provider" as "a person who: (1) undertakes to provide continuing care; and (2) is: (i) the owner or operator of a facility; or (ii) an applicant for or the holder of a preliminary, initial, or renewal certificate of registration." HS § 10-401(s); *see also* COMAR 32.02.01.01B(29) (continuing care regulation setting forth a similar definition of "provider"). Applying this definition, a court would be unlikely to conclude that a provider's controlling parent entity also qualifies as a "provider," unless the parent entity *itself* also undertakes to provide continuing care and is the facility's owner/operator or certificate applicant/holder.

"Governing body" is defined as "a board of directors, board of trustees, or similar group that ultimately directs the affairs of a provider, but whose members are not required to have an equity interest in the provider." HS § 10-401(o); *see also* COMAR 32.02.01.01B(23) (continuing care regulation setting forth a similar definition of "governing body"). If a parent entity's governing body does in fact "ultimately direct" the provider's "affairs," then the parent's board might qualify as a "governing body" under the definition in HS § 10-401(o). This determination would likely require analyzing the facts of the parent's control of the subsidiary provider.

A court might look at the statutory definition of "governing body" and the General Assembly's goal in providing greater subscriber participation in provider governance to conclude that HS § 10-427(a) requires a subscriber to be a member of the board of a parent with "ultimate control" of a provider. This interpretation aligns with the General Assembly's purpose of ensuring a governing body has the benefit of hearing from subscribers and the subscribers are represented in the facility's governance. If that representation is toothless because a different body (the parent's board) has ultimate control of the provider, then the General Assembly's purpose could be thwarted.

However, it is my view that it is more likely that a court would find the language of HS § 10-427 ambiguous under further consideration. Beyond the definitions, a court would also look at the remaining text of HS § 10-427, and Title 10, Subtitle 4, "Continuing Care," as a whole, to inform its interpretation. *Westminster Mgmt., LLC v. Smith*, 486 Md. 616, 645-46 (2024).

The statute speaks only of "governing body" in the singular. This suggests that the General Assembly did not intend for the membership requirement to apply to more than one governing body per provider. Under your proposed interpretation, a provider could have two governing bodies (the subsidiary provider's and the parent's) and both would be required to have a subscriber member.

Moreover, HS § 10-427 also imposes other requirements beyond subscriber membership on a provider governing body. For one, it requires the governing body to "confer with the resident association at each of the provider's facilities before the subscriber officially joins the governing body." HS § 10-427(a)(4).[2] The statute also allows the subscriber member to report on nonconfidential deliberations, actions, and policies of the governing body to the resident association, HS § 10-427(a)(5)(i), and requires the provider, as determined by the provider's governing body, to make available to subscribers either the nonconfidential portions of the minutes of each board meeting or a summary of the nonconfidential portions of the minutes, HS § 10-427(c).

If a "governing body" includes a parent's board, HS § 10-427 would require that board to meet with resident associations and disclose the parent's information to residents. It is not clear if these consequences of a broader interpretation of "governing body" were contemplated by the General Assembly. A parent entity's governing body likely considers matters irrelevant to a subsidiary provider's operations and finances and the interests of a subscriber, such that it would not make sense to require full membership on a parent's board.

Governing bodies are addressed in other places in Subtitle 4. First, the law requires providers to give disclosure statements that include, in relevant part:

- the name and address of the provider and of any parent or subsidiary;
- a description of the provider's form of governance and the composition of its governing body, and a statement that the provider will satisfy the requirements of §§ 10-426 and 10-427 of this subtitle; and
- a description of the process used by the provider to select a subscriber member of its governing body; and satisfy the requirements of § 10-427(a) of this subtitle.

[2] Quotations and citations to HS § 10-427 in this letter are to the current version as of December 2025, but the statute will be revised as of January 1, 2026, per Ch. 331, 2025 Md. Laws, House Bill 938, which provides for the appointment of an alternative subscriber member to a provider's governing body.

HS § 10-425(a)(3), (8), (9). This section distinguishes between the "provider" and "any parent," thus supporting my understanding that the definition of "provider" does not necessarily include a provider's controlling parent entity. It could also be read to suggest that only the provider's (and not a parent's) "governing body" must "satisfy the requirements of § 10-427," the statute discussed above.

Second, HS § 10-432(b) restricts owners or persons with "a right to control the provider, through governing body appointments or contractual or similar arrangements" from selling or transferring the right to control or more than 50% of the ownership without Maryland Department of Aging approval. This provision explicitly acknowledges that other persons (which could include a parent entity) can control a provider through the provider's "governing body." It also implicitly distinguishes among a controlling parent, a provider, and the provider's governing body. This shows that the General Assembly has been aware of the different governance structures of providers, and can put requirements on a parent entity, specifically, when it wishes.

In addition, a court would look to the legislative history and case law interpreting these statutes for further guidance of legislative intent. I found no cases interpreting the relevant defined terms or HS § 10-427. The legislative history of House Bill 938 of 2025, which revised HS § 10-427, reveals a goal of the bill was to provide a voice for members in facility governance, but does not answer the specific questions posed.

Thus, in my view, the statute is susceptible to more than one reasonable interpretation. I think a court could interpret "governing body" as used in HS § 10-427 either way — to either cover or not cover the governing body of a provider's controlling parent, though I think it slightly more likely that a court would find that the membership requirement does not apply to both a parent's governing body *and* the subsidiary provider's governing body, as that interpretation would pose somewhat illogical collateral requirements on a parent's board.

Sincerely,

Natalie Bilbrough

Natalie R. Bilbrough
Assistant Attorney General

Exhibit II

Bilbrough, Natalie. “RE: Continuing Care Retirement Communities.” *State of Maryland Office of the Attorney General.* Received by Senator Karen Lewis Young and Delegate Kenneth Kerr, December 17, 2025.