



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the House Health Committee

Chair Heather Bagnall

February 12, 2026

House Bill 804: Department of Aging - Aging Resilience Fund - Establishment

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, Delegate Wolek, and members of the Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 804: Department of Aging - Aging Resilience Fund - Establishment.

The MRHA supports the establishment of the Aging Resilience Fund, which seeks to finance community support programs, financial assistance services, and advocacy efforts to improve the wellbeing of Maryland senior citizens. The bill emphasizes mental health, housing assistance, income management, and coordinated health services for senior citizens and supports the need to integrate multiple programs in order to achieve these goals.

The 2020 census noted that 1 in 6 people in the United States were over the age of 65 and that this proportion is expected to grow dramatically in the coming years (1). Some sources even note that Maryland's aging population may be growing faster than that seen in other states (2). Additional studies have found that rural regions are aging more rapidly than urban centers and posit that over 20% of rural residents are over the age of 65 (3,4).

Older individuals experience increased mental and physical health conditions, struggle with food and transportation access, and may need additional social and technological support (3). These problems are more prevalent in rural settings, as transportation and access barriers are exacerbated in this population (4). As such, financing programs that combat these social, financial, and health barriers are vital to support the growing aging population in Maryland.

The MRHA understands the need to finance services to aid senior citizens in our community. We believe these programs will benefit many individuals across Maryland, especially those living in rural communities that are disproportionately experiencing barriers to care. As such, we at the MRHA strongly encourage your support for this bill.

With appreciation,

The Maryland Rural Health Association

1. The United States Census Bureau, 2023
2. Maryland Matters: Maryland aging slightly faster than U.S. as a whole, new Census numbers show
3. Yazdi-Feyzabadi, V., Sabermahani, M., Borhaninejad, V., & Iranmanesh, M. (2025). Breaking barriers: challenges faced by the older adults in accessing primary healthcare in a developing country. *BMC geriatrics*, 25(1).
4. Cohen, Steven A, and Mary L Greaney. "Aging in Rural Communities." *Current epidemiology reports* vol. 10,1 (2023): 1-16. doi:10.1007/s40471-022-00313-9

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