

HB0811_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#/0811- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Aging-in-Place Programs - Grants - Multigenerational Third Places (The Village Multigenerational Third Places Act)

TO: Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/0811, **Aging-in-Place Programs - Grants - Multigenerational Third Places (The Village Multigenerational Third Places Act)**

The Vista Prairie Organization has explained *The Power of Community: Why Social Connection Matters for Seniors*¹

Conversations about healthy aging often focus on diet and exercise. However, there's a vital, sometimes overlooked component that is just as critical to well-being: **social connection**. For seniors and their adult children, understanding the power of community is key to ensuring a high quality of life in later years.

Seniors who are socially isolated face **higher risks of chronic illness, depression, cognitive decline, and even premature death**. Social isolation is a serious public health issue, with some studies showing that loneliness and isolation can be as harmful as smoking or obesity. According to the 2023 US Surgeon General's report, **[social disconnection shortens lives by about as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.](#)**

The negative impacts of social isolation ripple across mental and physical health.

My Jewish faith teaches us that *the Torah commands us to respect all elderly, regardless of their scholarship and piety, because the many trials and experiences that each additional year of life brings yield a wisdom which the most accomplished young prodigy cannot equal. It describes Abraham as one who "grew old and came along in days" (Genesis 24:1)--his accumulated days, each replete with learning and achievement, meant that with each passing day his worth increased. Thus, a ripe old age is regarded as one of the greatest blessings to be bestowed upon man.*² Maryland is blessed by many nonprofit organizations and agencies which support our senior population.

This bill will authorize the Department of Aging to make grants to nonprofit organizations and area agencies on aging to support social connection for individuals in aging-in-place programs through events or gatherings at multigenerational third places.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0811.

¹ <https://vistaprairie.org/blog/the-power-of-community-why-social-connection-matters-for-seniors/>

² https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1168/jewish/Growing-Old.htm