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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB530- Aging-in-Place Programs - Grants - Multigenerational Third Places
(Village Multigenerational Third Places Act)

Across Maryland, many older adults want the ability to remain in their homes and communities. Aging in place allows individuals to maintain independence and age in the comfort of their own home. Yet, aging in place can sometimes bring challenges. These adults may experience loneliness and isolation that negatively affects their mental and physical health. Social integration is a crucial part of aging in place, but a lot of these communities lack accessible space for older adults to connect.

SB530 addresses this issue by strengthening opportunities for social connection within existing aging in place programs. Specifically, this bill allows the Department of Aging to make grants to nonprofit organizations and area agencies on aging to support social connections through events or gatherings at multigenerational third places. Multigenerational third places are defined as community spaces that support social connection, events, or gatherings among individuals of different ages. Think of a place where neighbors can gather to play a card game, watch a sporting event, or engage in any other activity without the logistical hassle of securing space every time members want to get together.

A village is a community-based, volunteer, and membership-driven organization that helps older adults age in place -- safely, independently, and comfortably in their own homes and communities. The village model offers social engagement, personal enrichment, transportation, and personal care for older adults through peer-to-peer support between neighbors and the older adults they support.

SB530 does not create a new mandate or program; rather, it builds on Maryland's existing aging-in-place grant program by allowing long and short-term rental or lease costs for third places to be eligible for Aging in Place grants. SB530 is a meaningful step in ensuring older adults in Maryland can age in place with proper support and social connections.

Thank you for considering this bill. I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB530.