



**Maryland**  
**Long-Term Care**  
**Ombudsman Program**

Date: March 6, 2026

Bill Number: **HB 1423**

Bill Title: Maryland Department of Health – Workgroup on Home– and Community–Based Services

Committee: Health

**Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Position: FAVORABLE**

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The Maryland Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program thanks the Chair and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill (HB) 1423 – Maryland Department of Health – Workgroup on Home– and Community–Based Services.

**Role and Perspective**

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocates for the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities throughout Maryland. Every day we hear directly from residents and families about their experiences navigating long-term services and supports. Because of this, we have a unique perspective on how the current system functions and where it fails the people it is meant to serve.

**Residents Waiting Years for Waiver Services**

Many residents in long-term care facilities who rely on Medicaid want to return to the community but are unable to do so because of long delays in accessing home and community-based services (HCBS) waivers. Residents are currently waiting months and even years to receive the waiver services they need in order to safely transition out of an institution and into a home or community setting.

Residents who are on Medicaid and live in long-term care often tell us they feel “stuck” in the institution. They may technically have the right to explore community options, but without a clear, timely, and navigable process for HCBS waivers and related supports, that right feels hollow. People describe feeling as if entering a nursing home is a one-way door, especially when their only coverage option is Medicaid.

These residents are clear: they want to live in the community with appropriate services and supports. They want to be near family, participate in community life, and have greater control over their daily routines. They understand that they may continue to need assistance, but they do not want that assistance to be available only in an institutional setting. The current system too often leaves them with the message that, because they are on Medicaid and already in a facility, they must simply accept living there indefinitely.

### **Why a Workgroup Matters**

HB 1423 creates a workgroup charged with examining how Maryland can improve the home and community-based services process and make concrete recommendations. This is a critical and necessary step.

From the Ombudsman perspective, the workgroup can:

- Identify barriers that cause residents to wait years for waiver services, including administrative delays, eligibility bottlenecks, and lack of coordination between facility discharge planning and community providers.
- Examine how residents who are already in long-term care facilities are educated about, and connected to, community-based options.
- Recommend ways to ensure that residents on Medicaid who wish to transition to the community are not disadvantaged simply because they currently reside in an institution.
- Propose timelines, accountability measures, and data collection so that Maryland can track whether people who want to live in the community are actually able to do so.

By formally bringing together state agencies, stakeholders, providers, and voices of residents and families, this workgroup can shine a light on the real-world experiences we see every day and translate them into actionable policy improvements.

### **Right to Live in the Community**

At the heart of HB 1423 is a recognition of a basic principle: people with disabilities and older adults have a right to live in the most integrated, community-based setting appropriate to their needs, with the services they require to do so safely. Residents of long-term care facilities repeatedly tell us that they want this opportunity. The workgroup established by HB 1423 will help Maryland move closer to making that right meaningful in practice, not just on paper.

For these reasons, and on behalf of the residents we serve, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1423. This bill is a first step toward ensuring that Marylanders who rely on Medicaid and currently reside in long-term care have a realistic path to receiving home and community-based services and to living in the community if that is their choice.

If you have any questions, please contact Karrie Craig, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, at [karrie.craig@maryland.gov](mailto:karrie.craig@maryland.gov) or (410) 940-1721.

Respectfully submitted,

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