AARP Maryland

One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475
1-866-542-8163 | Fax: 410-837-0269
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmd
facebook.com/aarpmd

HB 1280 - Supporting Our Caregiver Infrastructure Program – Feasibility Study
House Health Committee
March 5, 2026
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chair Bagnell, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee. My name is Sara Westrick, AARP Advocacy Director. On behalf of our 850,000 members across the state, I am emphatically supporting HB 1280, the Supporting Our Caregiver Infrastructure Program – Feasibility Study. We thank Delegate Wims and all of the co-sponsors of this important legislation.

AARP is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the interests of Americans age 50 and older and their families. As Maryland's population ages, more residents are taking on caregiving responsibilities, currently at 1.16 million persons or 24% of all adults in the state, according to AARP's latest research.[1] These caregivers provide essential physical, emotional, and social support, often at significant personal and financial cost. An estimated 39% of family caregivers experience serious financial hardship, taking on debt, draining savings, or struggling to afford food and medicine.

Maryland Attempted to Support Caregivers—But Funding Never Materialized

In 2024, the General Assembly passed SB 202 – Caregiver Expense Grant Program, which created a mechanism for caregivers to receive grants covering up to 30% of eligible care-related expenses. The bill authorized the Governor to include up to $5 million annually in the state budget for the program.

However, this appropriation was permissive, not mandatory, and ultimately, the program was never funded despite becoming law. The Fiscal and Policy Note confirms that the program could increase general fund spending beginning in FY 2026 if funded, but provides no evidence that appropriations were ever allocated.

As a result, caregivers received no financial benefit, and the state lost an important opportunity to pilot meaningful economic relief.

Why HB 1280 Matters

[1] All data in this testimony are from the AARP Caregiving in the U.S.: Maryland Snapshot, published in October 2025, and uploaded as an appendix.

HB 1280 is the next critical step. It acknowledges that, despite prior legislative intent, Maryland lacks a sustainable funding model, a clear understanding of economic impacts, and a roadmap for effective implementation.

This bill requires a rigorous feasibility study to examine potential increases in labor force participation, increased state and local tax revenues, reduced public benefit expenditures, and improvements to the overall economic vitality of the state.

The bill also directs DHS to evaluate funding sources, administrative needs, operational costs, and the optimal structure for caregiver stipends.

What Maryland Stands to Gain

Investing in caregivers strengthens Maryland's economy. When caregivers receive even modest financial support, they are more likely to remain in the workforce, maintain financial stability, delay or avoid costly institutional placements for loved ones, and reduce reliance on public benefits.

The feasibility study mandated by HB 1280 will finally give Maryland the data, modeling, and financial analysis needed to design a durable caregiver support system, one that avoids the fate of SB 202, which was enacted but never implemented.

Conclusion

Maryland's caregivers are holding together the state's long-term care system. They save the state billions, often at immense personal cost. HB 1280 is a prudent, responsible step toward building the supportive infrastructure they deserve.

AARP Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1280 so Maryland can finally chart a path toward sustainable caregiver support and ensure our previous legislative efforts do not remain unfunded promises.

For additional follow-up, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director at swestrick@aarp.org or 410-310-0374.