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Legislative District 26
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee
Criminal Subcommittee
Chair, Juvenile Subcommittee
Public Safety Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony for HB1251 – *Health Facilities and Health Insurance – Palliative Care – Required Access and 3 Coverage*

Good afternoon, Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and esteemed members of the Health Committee.

My name is Delegate Jamila Woods, and I am here today to request a favorable report on **House Bill 1251** legislation that strengthens access to high-quality palliative care by removing the unnecessary hurdles that often stand between families and the support they desperately need.

For far too long, Marylanders living with serious illness have slipped through the cracks of our health care system. Families watch loved ones struggle with unmanaged pain, overwhelming symptoms, and emotional distress. Not because we lack the medical knowledge to help them, but because access to high-quality palliative care remains inconsistent and, in many communities, unavailable. HB 1251 is our chance to change that.

This bill takes a meaningful and overdue step toward ensuring that every Maryland resident, regardless of age, diagnosis, income, or insurance status, can receive the relief, support, and dignity that palliative care provides. It requires hospitals, nursing homes, hospice facilities, and long-term care settings to offer access to a dedicated palliative care program beginning in 2027. Importantly, it makes clear that palliative care is not limited to end-of-life care. It is care that improves quality of life at any stage of a serious illness, offered alongside curative treatment, not instead of it.

HB 1251 does not create new burdens or weaken existing standards of care. Instead, it modernizes Maryland's approach to serious-illness support so that our policies reflect the realities patients and families face every day. The bill directs the Maryland Department of Health to establish clear, uniform standards for palliative care delivery. Standards that include staffing expectations, training requirements, and quality assurance measures. These are elements that already exist in high-performing

programs across the country and are routinely relied upon to have safe, person-centered care.

Just as importantly, HB 1251 preserves Maryland's commitment to high-quality, evidence-based medical practice. Facilities retain flexibility in how they meet the requirement to provide access to a dedicated palliative care program, whether through on-site teams, regional partnerships, tele-palliative services, or formal consultation arrangements. This guarantees that hospitals, nursing homes, and long-term care providers can comply in ways that reflect their size, resources, and community needs without compromising the quality or availability of care.

At its heart, this bill is about compassion, dignity, and fairness. It is about making sure that no Marylander faces the hardest moments of illness without the support they deserve. It is about honoring the legacy of Edna G. Neal and many others like her through a health care system that sees the whole person and not just the disease they are facing.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 1251. Maryland families have waited long enough for this level of care. Let's make sure they no longer have to. And as we move this bill forward, I want to acknowledge that we are actively working with stakeholders on amendments to clarify certain provisions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jamila J. Woods".

Delegate Jamila J. Woods
Maryland House of Delegates
District 26 – Prince George's County