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**HB 1117 – Elopement Response Devices – Insurance and Maryland Medical Assistance
Program Coverage and Provision Under State Programs
House Health Committee
March 13, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the House Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1117 regarding elopement response devices. We appreciate Delegates Lopez, Embry, Kaufman, and Wims for sponsoring this important legislation.

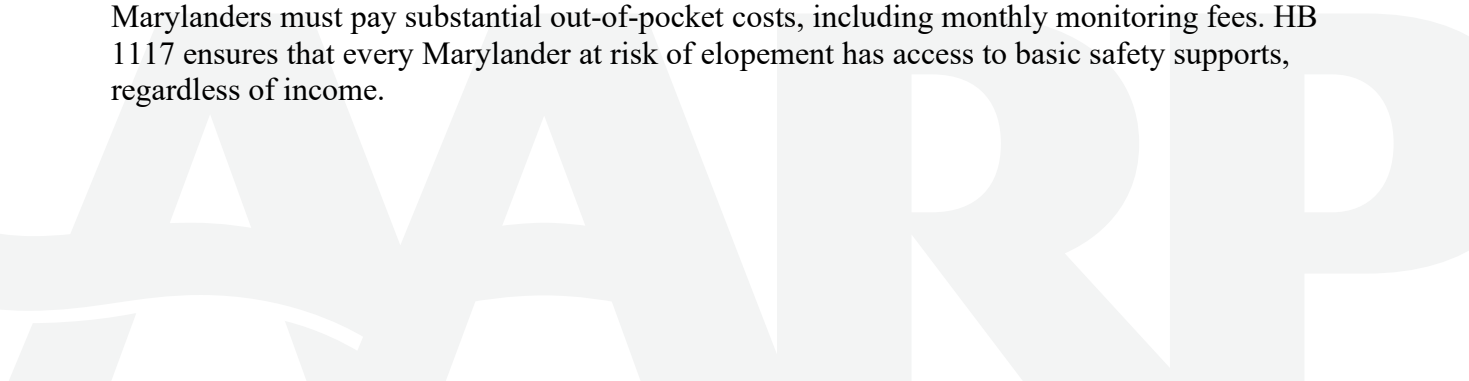
My name is Sara Westrick, Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland, representing approximately 850,000 members and bringing the experiences and priorities of Marylanders over 50 to policy discussions.

We worked closely with Laila's Gift and other partners to develop the LEAD Act package of bills, including HB 1117, which addresses the often-overlooked issue of elopement and wandering among individuals with cognitive, developmental, and neurological conditions.

Elopement affects thousands of Maryland families, caregivers, schools, and long-term care providers each year. Children and adults with autism, Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and other conditions frequently wander or attempt to leave safe environments, creating life-threatening risks. Families live with the constant fear that a loved one may slip out a door or window and encounter traffic, water, extreme temperatures, or other hazards. HB 1117 recognizes elopement as a public health and safety issue and ensures that Maryland addresses it with appropriate urgency.

This bill is a critical part of the solution because it ensures that approved elopement response devices, for example, door and window sensors and wearable GPS-enabled devices, are treated as legitimate medical devices or assistive technology under state programs. It requires Medicaid coverage for children under 21, individuals eligible for home and community-based services waivers, and those with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias who meet medical necessity criteria. Coverage applies when prescribed by a qualified licensed provider and documented in a care plan such as an IEP, IFSP, or behavioral health plan.

For many families, these devices are not optional but essential safety tools. Currently, many Marylanders must pay substantial out-of-pocket costs, including monthly monitoring fees. HB 1117 ensures that every Marylander at risk of elopement has access to basic safety supports, regardless of income.



The legislation will help enhance safety by reducing the risk of injury or death from wandering, promote equity by ensuring access to proven supports, and improve efficiency by preventing costly emergency responses, searches, hospitalizations, and unnecessary institutional placements.

HB 1117 provides support to families across the lifespan, particularly those caring for individuals with autism, dementia, or other cognitive disabilities. By passing this bill, Maryland will lead the country in ensuring safer, more effective responses to elopement and in supporting families who have long asked for help.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1117.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick at swestrick@aarp.org or 410-310-0374.