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Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill 860/ House Bill 804-Department of Aging - Aging Resilience Fund -
Establishment
April 2nd, 2026
1:00pm
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and distinguished members of the Health Committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in support of **Senate Bill 860 - Department of Aging - Aging Resilience Fund - Establishment**. Senate Bill 860 passed the Senate unanimously and is identical to its cross-file, House Bill 804. I would like to thank Delegate Wolek for her leadership on this issue.

Across Maryland, more residents are living longer, and the population of older adults continues to grow. In 2000, individuals aged 60 and older made up approximately 15% of the state's population. By 2030, that share is projected to grow to 26%.

The Maryland Department of Aging plays a vital role in supporting this growing population. The Department connects older adults with essential resources, helps protect their independence and ability to age on their own terms, and works across government, nonprofit, and private sectors to highlight the important economic and social contributions older Marylanders make to our communities.

As this population grows, more residents will rely on the services and programs the Department provides. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of these services is increasingly important.

State funding for the Department in fiscal years 2025 and 2026, as well as the proposed fiscal year 2027 budget, has remained relatively consistent at about \$40 million. However, federal funding has declined significantly during that same period, decreasing by \$8.3 million. Given current state budget challenges and uncertainty around future federal support, this is an important moment to diversify the Department's funding sources.

Senate Bill 860 addresses that need by establishing a special, non-lapsing fund within the Department of Aging called the Aging Resilience Fund. This fund will support the Department's efforts to develop innovative approaches to aging, strengthen cross-sector partnerships, and expand equitable access to resources for older Marylanders.

The fund may be supported through external contributions, investment earnings, and any fees collected by the Department. Amendments adopted in both chambers clarified that fund money supplements rather than replaces regular appropriations, focused permitted uses on partnership development and Department programs and services, protected the fund from Governor reductions, and added an annual reporting requirement.

One of the Department's key goals is to modernize Maryland's aging infrastructure by strengthening collaboration among government, nonprofit, and private organizations serving older adults. The flexibility of the Aging Resilience Fund will help advance that goal by supporting innovative programming and partnerships across the state.

We worked closely with the Department of Aging in developing this legislation. The bill carries no fiscal note, as the Department can administer the fund using existing resources. **I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 860.** Thank you for your kind consideration.