



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

*Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters*

*Baltimore Jewish
Council*

Catholic Charities

*Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council*

Church of the Brethren

*Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County*

*Jewish Community
Relations Council of
Greater Washington*

*Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland*

*Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic
Conference*

*Mental Health
Association of Maryland*

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

*National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter*

Presbytery of Baltimore

*The Coordinating
Center*

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Testimony in Support of HB 1033 – Office of Health Care Quality – Influenza Virus Immunization Education and Information – Assisted Living Facilities Health and Government Operations Committee Thursday, March 4, 2021

The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing and care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

MSCAN supports House Bill 1033 because it helps to ensure that assisted living residents receive information about the availability of flu shots which can protect them against unnecessary illness and death due to seasonal flu. Sadly, according to the CDC, seniors are at 70-85 % higher risk of death from seasonal flu, and account for 50-70 % of hospitalizations for complications. This year in the midst of Covid19, seasonal flu vaccinations have been especially important for seniors with multiple chronic medical conditions because of their effectiveness in reducing the incidence and severity of the seasonal flu, yet just over half of Marylanders get their flu vaccine – not nearly enough – particularly among Black and Hispanic populations who experience higher flu hospitalizations.

MSCAN supports this bill because it proposes a “work smarter, not harder” approach to the effort. The bill simply requires the Office of Health Care Quality, on their regular monitoring visits, to check to see that assisted living facilities are notifying their residents and staff about the availability of seasonal flu vaccines and the benefits of receiving the shots. Statewide, only 57% of assisted living residents and staff receive annual seasonal flu vaccines. The bill does not place an extra burden on facilities already educating their residents, but encourages those facilities who may not have been notifying their residents and staff to begin doing so. The CDC offers easy to print posters which can be utilized to accomplish this goal, or facilities can use any education method that works best for them.

Seasonal flu vaccines help prevent serious infections, complications, hospitalizations and deaths, particularly important among high risk groups such as the elderly. This bill helps to ensure that assisted living residents and staff are made aware of the benefits and availability of this important preventive resource.

MSCAN respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1033. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.