



COMMISSION ON AGING

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Pendergrass,

On behalf of the Montgomery Commission on Aging (CoA), this memorandum supports HB 416, Health Care Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Memory Care and Alzheimer’s Disease Unit Regulations, which requires that the Maryland Department of Health promulgate specific standards for governing memory care and Alzheimer’s disease units in Assisted Living Programs.

The CoA is authorized by the Older Americans Act, P.L. 116-131, and was established by Montgomery County in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests and issues of Older Adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state and national levels.

The Commission firmly believes that the standards enumerated in this proposed legislation are absolutely necessary to ensure quality of care for the vulnerable residents served in these programs. We note that the standards under HB 416 are very basic standards that one would expect of any program serving this population. It is somewhat surprising that these standards are not already requirements given that according to current regulations, assisted living residents have the right to be treated with consideration and respect, with full recognition of their human dignity and individuality (COMAR 10.07.14.35). One wonders how memory care and Alzheimer’s disease units in Assisted Living Programs can successfully maintain this essential right without dementia-specific training of the staff caring for these residents, as required under this Bill.

Other specific standards under this Bill are equally basic. The Bill requires that the Assisted Living Program have an adequate direct care staff and nursing staff ratio to meet their residents’ needs, and that it has appropriate frequency and types of activities for the residents. Clearly, adequate staffing and a full complement of activities are fundamental in the care of these residents.

Finally, the Bill requires that those Assisted Living Programs that claim to have specialized memory care and Alzheimer’s disease units support their claim of enhanced expertise with enhanced procedures such as increased frequency of nighttime bed checks to prevent dangerous events among residents. Since Alzheimer’s Disease often affects sleep patterns, these residents often get out of bed during the night. Increased bed checks clearly are needed.

Department of Health and Human Services

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Again, the CoA supports HB 416, and we ask the Committee for a favorable report. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Selter

Barbara Selter, Chair

Cc: Members of House Health and Government Operations Committee