

Finance Committee
February 24, 2022

SB 511 – Secretary of Aging – Qualifications - SUPPORT

Madame Chair and members of the committee, my name is Isabella Shycoff.

SB 511 is a modest proposal, but one that is critical to moving forward with a modern and effective government agency.

Although I'm now retired, for 23 years I was the Executive Director of LifeSpan, the largest senior care association in Maryland. It was my business to understand statewide aging services, and the senior care market sector. In my professional capacity at LifeSpan, I had the opportunity to work with the last 4 Department of Aging Secretaries.

While all four secretaries certainly brought their own strengths to the position, Maryland hasn't had a Secretary of Aging with any aging services administration experience since Sue Ward, which was, 3 Secretaries and over 20 years ago.

Why does this matter?

- **For Healthcare** - Pandemic has savaged Maryland's seniors, the vast majority of the 13k+ deaths have been among the elderly.
- **Demographic Realities** - Our state population is aging! Maryland seniors will outnumber children by 2030.
- **Workforce Crisis** - The caregiver workforce - (particularly for senior care) is currently experiencing crushing, debilitating, unprecedented shortages.
- **Affordable Housing** - Epic waiting lists for affordable assisted living and senior housing.

So I think now is a good time to begin making seniors, this growing demographic, a state public policy priority in Maryland. We can begin by requiring that whoever leads this agency going forward, at a minimum, has the relevant experience and understanding of this demographic to lead. And then follow with providing the necessary resources to make Maryland a leader in the country in aging services policy and programming.