

Senate Finance Committee  
February 24, 2022

SB 511 Human Services–Secretary of Aging–Qualifications **SUPPORT**

My name is Frances Lodder. For the past thirty-five years I have been involved in the field of geriatrics as both a licensed social worker and a caregiver. As a caregiver, I helped my mother navigate the myriad systems of health care, as she lost her independence and finally died in my home under hospice care. As a caregiver, I watched the decline of my husband, advocated for his health care needs and provided the personal care he needed in the last days of his life. Professionally, I provide behavioral health care services to seniors living in affordable housing who cannot locate a provider who accepts Medicare insurance nor can afford the deductibles. It is in this role that I strongly support SB 511.

For the first time in history older adults are projected to take the population lead, and the number of people over the age of 80 is projected to triple by 2050. The new Secretary of the Maryland Department of Aging will need to be able to find policy solutions that will address the real challenges we face. In this rapidly changing world, the luxury of learning on the job doesn't exist. The new Secretary must be ready from day one to understand the complexities of Federal, State and local policies and how these policies affect the day-to-day lives of seniors. The new Secretary must know how to find the funding, to understand where the gaps are and to work to ensure that chronically underfunded services get help. The issues of physician shortage, increasing cost of long-term care, economic disparities and making technology affordable are but a few of the problems that the new Secretary will face. Relevant education, extensive experience and commitment to the Older Americans Act are but a few of the credentials needed to ensure that Maryland's seniors will continue to have a leader ready to move forward. I strongly urge your support for SB 511.