

Senate Bill 511 Human Services – Secretary of Aging – Qualifications

Senate Finance Committee

February 24, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 511.

SB 511 requires the Secretary of Aging to be professionally qualified with extensive experience with laws, legislation and regulations relating to aging, programs for aging individuals including evidence-based and data-driven programs, and demonstrate a commitment to the missions of both the Federal Older Americans Act and the Department of Aging.

According to the Department of Legislative Services, the Secretary of Aging is responsible for managing a budget of almost \$65 million.¹ As Maryland's older adult population grows at a rapid pace, the role of the Secretary is increasingly critical in meeting the front-line behavioral health, food and nutrition, and community-based wellness needs of these communities. The Secretary oversees the state's Area Agencies on Aging, the Public Guardianship Administration, and the Community for Life program and the Durable Medical Equipment Reuse program.

To best serve the health interests of all Marylanders, it is essential that the Secretary of Aging be professionally qualified through experience or education in a health-related field. For this reason, MHAMD supports SB 511 and urges a favorable report.

¹ Department of Legislative Services (January 2022). *Maryland Department of Health Fiscal 2023 Budget Overview*. <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2023fy-budget-docs-operating-M00-MDH-Overview.pdf>

¹ Department of Legislative Services (January 2021). *Maryland Department of Aging Fiscal 2022 Budget Overview*. <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2022fy-budget-docs-operating-D26A07-Department-of-Aging.pdf>

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