

Testimony Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee

House Bill 80 – Home and Community-Based Services Waiver – Participation and Applications

Support

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers – Maryland (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for *House Bill 80 - Home and Community-Based Services Waiver – Participation and Applications*.

We support this bill because we know that most older adults want to age in their homes and communities. This observation is supported by research; AARP's "Home and Community Preferences Survey." data shows that 77 percent of adults 50 and older want to remain in their homes for the long term. House Bill 80 allows more older Marylanders to do just that, by increasing the number of people who receive services under the home and community-based services waiver (HCBS), establishing a system of accountability for the management of program applications, and reducing the current registry/wait list for the program.

Social Workers have consistently advocated for the rights of adults to live in the least restrictive setting with support services like those offered by HCBS. Not only does this approach provide a higher quality of life for those receiving services, it also reduces the financial, physical, and emotional toll on family caregivers.

Among those who would benefit from this legislation are the thousands of applicants who have been on the HCBS registry for 4-8 years without even getting an opportunity to apply for the program.

An example of a family who would greatly benefit from the passage of HB 80:

Mrs. J is a 76-year-old woman who lives with her 78-year-old husband of 50 years in their home in Baltimore. Mrs. J was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia four years ago. Her husband has been her primary caregiver and they have two adult daughters who visit weekly to help with grocery shopping, laundry, and housekeeping. Mrs. J has been on the HCBS registry for three years. Over the past six months her condition has declined significantly, and her husband is exhausted, as her needs for assistance with bathing, dressing, feeding have increased. None of the family members can provide additional help, and the couple's limited assets have been exhausted. Mr. J fears he will have to place his wife in a nursing home and has called to see where she is on the registry, only to be told "it's going to be several months" before she may receive consideration for services.

Older Marylanders deserve the opportunity to age with dignity in their homes. We ask that you give a favorable report to HB 8

Respectfully,

Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW

Executive Director, NASW-MD