



## CARE BRAVELY

SB296 – Housing and Community Development – Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – February 14, 2023

Testimony of Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development LifeBridge Health

Position: **SUPPORT**

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I am writing in SUPPORT of SB296. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

SB296 Establishes the Whole-Home Repairs Program in the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide grants to certain local administering agencies for the purposes of ensuring that owner-occupied and rental units are free of habitability concerns, improving coordination across home repairs programs, and increasing retention in workforce development programs; and establishing the Whole-Home Repairs Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund.

Maryland's older adult population continues to rise and its housing stock is insufficient. Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors (HUBS) and similar programs connect seniors to a network of Baltimore organizations with a shared mission of helping adult homeowners age in place. LifeBridge Health / Sinai Hospital is the only hospital-based HUBS site and provides additional services such as assessment and case management services that include not only home improvements but also referrals to other LifeBridge health-related services that many residents need to maintain or improve health status. Unsafe housing conditions often pose additional risks to homeowners, such as fires and building collapse, often resulting in additional injury to residents which may require them to seek medical care. By consolidating the efforts of multiple organizations, HUBS creates efficiencies in referral, intake, and application procedures. The HUBS initiative ensures that clients are matched with the correct services and eliminates redundancies so that a greater number of older adults can live in homes that are safe, healthy, and comfortable. A well-coordinated repair program on the state level would be a great tool for networks throughout the state.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for SB296.

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