



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: February 26, 2024

Bill Number: **HB784**

Bill Title: Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times

Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

MDOA Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

The Department of Aging (MDOA) submits this letter of support with amendments for House Bill 784 - Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times.

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) serves as Maryland's State Unit of Aging, administering federal funding for core programs, overseeing the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) network at the local level that provides services, and planning for Maryland's older adult population. With funding and oversight from MDOA, Maryland's 19 AAA's serve as public guardians in last resort situations for adults 65 and older where no other family member or suitable alternative guardian is available. The majority of Maryland's public guardianship cases are initiated at hospitals, who have expressed interest in modifications to the guardianship process as a potential solution to Maryland's worst in the country emergency department wait times.

Pursuant to a recent Executive Order, in January 2024, MDOA launched the Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative,¹ which will build upon existing efforts across state agencies, private and philanthropic sectors and other stakeholders to tackle real-life challenges throughout the lifespan, taking a whole-of-life and whole-of-government approach. Key goals of Longevity-Ready Maryland are for all Marylanders to lead lives that are healthy, financially secure, socially connected, purposeful. Longevity-readiness of course involves a high-quality hospital and emergency department system - so that all Marylanders can smoothly access acute care when

¹ See, Maryland Department of Aging: Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative *available at*: <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/LRM.aspx>



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

they need it. MDOA, speaking on behalf of the AAA network, one of a few² direct subject matter experts on the public guardianship process in Maryland and should be part of this ongoing conversation. MDOA feels strongly that there is more guardianship avoidance, data collection and other upstream work that could be done through partnership and the Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative for the benefit of emergency department capacity. MDOA requests amended language adding MDOA to this task force.

For these reasons, the Department of Aging respectfully urges a favorable with amendment report for HB784. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at andrea.nunez@maryland.gov or (443) 414-8183.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carmel Roques". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Carmel Roques
Secretary
Maryland Department of Aging

² MDOA notes that the Department of Human Services and local Departments of Social Services serve as public guardians for adults 18-65, the Maryland Judiciary and State's Attorneys are heavily involved in guardianship cases, as are several advocacy groups representing the interests of Marylanders with developmental disabilities.