



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**
February 28, 2024
House Bill 784: Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times
Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support with amendment for House Bill 784.

HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state. HFAM is affiliated with the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which is the largest association in the United States representing long-term and post-acute care providers.

House Bill 784 establishes the Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times to monitor, discuss, and make recommendations for reducing emergency department wait times including legislative, regulatory, or other policy initiatives; and requires the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2026.

We appreciate that HB 784 includes a representative from the nursing home industry and we respectfully request that this legislation be amended to specifically include a representative from the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM) on the Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times. We believe that the expertise of a leader from our organization will add value and insight to the Task Force. HFAM membership represents a key segment of the nursing home sector in Maryland and we would appreciate being included when discussing issues relative to emergency department wait times.

Maryland skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers, assisted living communities, and other senior living providers are a vital part of the healthcare continuum. Nursing homes provide a safety net for Marylanders across the state who would otherwise likely receive care in a hospital at a much higher cost. And, our centers care for people who are battling multiple chronic illnesses, including those with a behavioral diagnosis.

All of healthcare, and especially the long-term care sector, continues to struggle with workforce recruitment and retention. The workforce shortage in nursing homes can have real impacts on care delivery. At times, it has caused delays in hospital transfers to nursing homes for post-acute or long-term care. This in turn has the effect of increasing hospital lengths of stay and costs of care. HFAM and our members are dedicated to meeting the needs of Marylanders and to working with our colleagues at the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA) to find solutions that protect and enhance quality care.

Evolving the Maryland Total Cost of Care Contract is one solution in the works that will help protect and enhance quality care. Nursing homes are ready, willing, and able to enter full and equal partnerships with hospitals to coordinate care, improve clinical outcomes, and reduce costs. In terms of partnership, strategy, innovation, and boldness in healthcare, fighting for healthcare equity, bending the cost curve,

and continuing to provide access to quality care, Maryland nursing homes have the potential to be part of the solution and lead the nation.

For these reasons, and with the proposed amendment to add an HFAM representative to the Task Force, we request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 784.

Submitted by:

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