

TO: Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: LeadingAge Maryland
SUBJECT: House Bill 36, Department of Aging – Aging Services – Program Repeal and Consolidation
DATE: January 23, 2025
POSITION: Favorable

LeadingAge Maryland supports House Bill 36, Department of Aging – Aging Services – Program Repeal and Consolidation

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 140 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Members of LeadingAge Maryland provide health care, housing, and services to more than 20,000 older persons each year. Our mission is to be the trusted voice for aging in Maryland, and our vision is that Maryland is a state where older adults have access to the services they need, when they need them, in the place they call home. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, public agencies, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland. LeadingAge Maryland represents the vast majority of CCRCs in the state.

House Bill 36 repeals the long-defunct Interagency Committee on Aging Services and consolidates three core Maryland Department of Aging state-funded programs under single statutory umbrella. Those three programs are Senior Care, Senior Assisted Living Subsidy and Congregate Housing Services. The Senior Care Program has an annual budget of \$14 million and provides in home community support including food, laundry, personal care, transportation, home repair, health services, adult day care and caregiver support to 3,000 Marylanders age 65+ who make less than 60% of the median state income and have under 11,000 assets. The Program reverts funds and overlaps in services with the Congregate Housing Services Program which this bill seeks to address. The Senior Assisted Living Subsidy has an annual budget of \$5 million and provides partial subsidy for assisted living monthly fee up to \$1,075 per month. Clients served include 500 Marylanders age 62+ who live in assisted living communities and meet local income eligibility guidelines. Currently, there is declining participation from providers. The Congregate Housing Services Program has a \$2 million annual budget and provides in-home support (typically) in federally-subsidized age-restricted apartment buildings including food and meals, laundry, chore assistance, and personal care to 500 Marylanders 62+ who live in apartments and make less than 60% of the median state income and have under \$27,375 in assets. Similarly, there is declining participation, high administrative burden, not person-centered.

LeadingAge Maryland supports House Bill 36 for the following reasons:

- Addressing overlaps in services: Specifically, the Senior Care Program and Congregate Housing Services Program (CHSP) both provide similar in-home community support services, including food, laundry, personal care, and transportation. The overlap creates inefficiencies by duplicating administrative efforts and potentially confusing eligibility or service access for older adults. Consolidation would streamline service delivery, ensuring that resources are used more effectively and allowing the state to focus on a single, unified system for community support services.
- Increasing flexibility and person-centered care: A consolidated program could allow older adults to access a broader range of services tailored to their circumstances, whether they live in apartments, homes, or assisted living facilities, without the constraints of rigid program categories. Also, the bill reduced administrative costs and burden. Each program currently operates with its own administrative structure, resulting in unnecessary costs and bureaucratic complexity. By combining these programs, administrative functions such as eligibility determination, service coordination, and oversight could be centralized, leading to cost savings and improved service coordination.
- Addressing Declining Provider Participation: Both the Senior Assisted Living Subsidy and CHSP suffer from declining provider participation, likely due to complex requirements, low reimbursement rates, or burdensome reporting. Consolidation could create an opportunity to revamp the subsidy structure and simplify provider participation requirements, making it more attractive for providers to remain involved and deliver services. It could also enable the state to negotiate better contracts or create incentives for providers to serve more low-income seniors.
- Enhancing Equity in Service Delivery: Consolidation would enable the state to apply consistent eligibility criteria and asset limits, reducing disparities in who can access services and how much support they receive. For example, the asset limit for CHSP is currently more than double that of the Senior Care Program, which can create inequities in access to services. A unified program could establish fairer and more uniform guidelines.
- Preventing Fund Reversion: The Senior Care Program reverts unused funds, indicating that resources are not being fully utilized due to inefficiencies or gaps in service delivery. A consolidated program could improve fund allocation and utilization by expanding eligibility or broadening the range of services offered, ensuring that available resources are used to meet growing needs.
- Aligning with Broader Policy Trends: Many states are moving toward integrated models of care for older adults to reduce fragmentation, improve outcomes, and ensure that seniors can age in place with dignity. By consolidating these programs, Maryland would be better positioned to pursue federal funding or grants that reward innovative, integrated aging services.

Consolidating the Senior Care Program, Senior Assisted Living Subsidy, and Congregate Housing Services Program into a single, streamlined program would reduce administrative burden, eliminate service redundancies, enhance person-centered care, and make better use of available funds. By adopting this approach, Maryland can improve the efficiency and equity of its aging services, ensuring that more older adults can access the support they need in a sustainable and cost-effective manner

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for House Bill 36.