Protecting Our Aging Population

Every senior deserves to live in a safe place, regardless of whether that is in their own home or in a high-quality care facility. However, right now in Maryland we know that is not the case. Far too many seniors who chose to stay in their own home live there without access to the services they need to for a healthy life. Others have ended up in substandard unlicensed assisted living facilities, often without knowing the facility is unlicensed or because they have no other options financially. With the continual advancements in medicine, the senior population will keep growing, and this will become an unfortunate reality for more and more Marylanders. By 2030 Maryland’s 60+ population is projected to reach 1.7 million people, requiring more and more resources. Several Associated agencies, including, Jewish Community Services (JCS), Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc. (CHAI), and CHANA provide services to the rapidly aging Baltimore Jewish Community. These aging bills aim to address some of the most pressing needs of seniors in our community.

Bills That We Are Advocating For

**Senate Bill 670/ House Bill 564 (SB670/HB564) – Department of Aging – Assisted Living Program Subsidies – (Senator Zucker and Delegate Reznik)**

This bill increases the Senior Assisted Living Group Home Subsidy for the first time in over 20 years. The bill mandates an increase from $650 to $1,000, while also tying the subsidy to the consumer price index, ensuring that it will increase with inflation. The subsidy amount is to be reassessed every three years by the Department of Aging to determine future increases.

**House Bill 498 (HB498) – Department of Aging – Grants For Aging-In-Place Programs – Funding (Delegate Hill)**

This bill would mandate at least $1 million in funding in the Governor’s annual budget for the Nonprofits For Our Aging Neighbors (NANA) program under the Department of Aging. Funds would be awarded to nonprofit organizations and area agencies on aging to either expand existing aging-in-place programs or spur the development of new ones. Existing aging-in-place programs would be required to provide a minimum one-to-one match for the funding received. New innovative programs would not be required to provide a match. Additionally, 10% of this funding will be dedicated towards senior village programs.
Senate Bill 966 – Health Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Referrals and Licenses (Senator Hettleman)

This bill would make it a civil offense for referral agencies to refer clients to unlicensed assisted living facilities. It would also require more transparency by referral agencies by requiring them to register with the state and disclose financial relationships with assisted living facilities. It would also give the Attorney General the authority to shut down unlicensed assisted living facilities in certain cases and investigate referral agency violations.

Why is this Good for Maryland and the Jewish Community?

Seniors are the fastest growing segment of Maryland’s population, and when they thrive so does the rest of our community and state. With the cost of quality senior care rapidly rising, it is becoming more difficult for seniors to find a safe place to live where they can receive the care they need. Seniors should have the option to age in their homes if they desire, and if they are unable to do so, they should be able to live in a quality care facility that is well regulated. As our population ages, we need to ensure that all Marylanders have the proper services and protections to age safely and affordably.

What Can Be Done?

Do you know or care for an aging senior? Do they benefit from an aging-in-place program? Do you know of someone who has suffered from elder abuse? Share their story.