



COMMISSION ON AGING

February 6, 2017

Delegate Joseph F. Vallario, Jr.  
Chair, Judiciary Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
House Office Building, Room 101  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 256

Dear Delegate Vallario:

I write on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging, in support of HB 256, *Adult Protective Services - Investigation - Time Period Increase*. The legislation would increase from 30 to 60 days, the time during which a local department of social services, or in Montgomery County, the Department of Health and Human Services, must complete an investigation after receiving a report of suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation of an alleged vulnerable adult.

APS exists to protect vulnerable adults who cannot protect themselves because of physical, cognitive, or other serious impairment. While most older adults and adults with disabilities live independently without assistance, some face abuse or neglect by others and need trained professionals to identify their needs and advocate on their behalf. Some have dementia or other cognitive impairments that require additional interventions. Some may simply be struggling with routine activities and would benefit from in-home support services to maintain their health and independence.

When APS receives a report of suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation of an at-risk or vulnerable adult, an investigation must be conducted to evaluate whether APS services are required. If needed, APS will request the assistance of law enforcement or other appropriate agency. APS investigations include home visits and other meetings with the adult needing assistance; an assessment of the person's capacity, safety, and needs; consultations with family and professionals as appropriate; and a determination of what services or interventions, if any, would be beneficial to maintain the individual's well-being and independence. To achieve these goals, the APS worker must also build trust with the vulnerable adult. Investigations require highly trained staff, and can take significant time and resources.

The current requirement of 30 days to complete an APS investigation does not recognize the reality that the agency is facing rapidly growing numbers of increasingly complex cases, including those in which medical and financial documents must be obtained and reviewed. In addition, and all too often, APS must operate with limited staff and resources. In 2016, Montgomery County APS investigated more than 808 clients, a 37% increase over cases handled during the previous five years. Extending the time to complete an investigation from 30 to 60 days would allow APS to meet its obligations more effectively.

The Commission also recognizes and appreciates that there is no change to the requirement that APS investigations be completed within 10 days if the report indicates that an emergency exists.

Thankyou

Noelle Heyman, Chair  
Commission on Aging

cc. Delegate Kathleen Dumais

**Department of Health and Human Services**

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436