



COMMISSION ON AGING

February 21, 2017

The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 3
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 248

Dear Senator Middleton:

I write on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging in support, of SB 248, the *Senior Call-Check Service and Notification Program*. The Commission on Aging serves as an advocate for the health, safety and well-being of Montgomery County's older residents.

SB 248 proposes to establish a voluntary, statewide program to provide daily phone calls with seniors to verify that they are safe and well. Participants would agree to receive a telephone call, or would call a designated telephone number, at a specified time each day. If the participant does not answer or make the scheduled a call, a follow up call would be made to notify a person of record, whose name has been provided to the program, so that someone can check on the well-being of the senior. The legislation allows the service to be designed to accommodate either automated or live calls. Although some jurisdictions now offer limited telephone reassurance programs, some of which are operated by volunteers, this legislation would develop a statewide resource.

The Fiscal and Policy Note prepared by the Department of Legislative Services estimates that at least 352,000 Marylanders age 65 or older live alone. Many would appreciate the option of receiving a daily phone call to ensure that they are safe and well. In addition, many long-distance caregivers would welcome knowing that their loved ones could participate in a telephone reassurance program such as is proposed in this legislation.

We recognize that if the proposed legislation is enacted, the Department of Aging will be charged with developing regulations to implement the program. There are some issues that we hope will be addressed if the program is implemented. They include: whether calls are in-person or automated; number of follow-up calls if the person doesn't answer/ make the daily call and whether those would be in-person or automated; training for check-in callers including resources and what to do if person receiving the calls becomes incapacitated; and whether there will be screening of the check-in callers to guard against potential fraud or exploitation.

Thank you for your consideration and support of Maryland seniors. We urge you to support SB 248.

Noelle Heyman, Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Aging.

cc: Leslie Frey
John J. Kenney
Secretary Rona Kramer
Montgomery County Delegation