



HEARING NOTES

Bill: 22-0254

Office of Aging – Independent Agency

Committee: Economic and Community Development

Chaired By: Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton

Hearing Date: January 31, 2023

Time (Beginning): 2:00 PM

Time (Ending): 4:25 PM

Location: City Hall; Clarence "Du" Burns Chambers and WEBEX

Total Attendance: ~40

Committee Members in Attendance:

John Bullock Mark Conway Ryan Dorsey Robert Stokes Odette Ramos

Bill Synopsis in the file?..... yes no n/a

Attendance sheet in the file? yes no n/a

Agency reports read? yes no n/a

Video or audio-digitally recorded? yes no n/a

Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file? yes no n/a

Evidence of notification to property owners? yes no n/a

Final vote taken at this hearing? yes no n/a

Motioned by:

Seconded by:

Final Vote:

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

- Councilmember Zeke Cohen, Sponsor
- Mary Pat Clarke, former Councilmember, resident
- Tessa Hill-Aston, former Director of the Department of Aging

- Sarah Matthews, resident
 - Miss Joi, resident Canton Community
 - Sophia Gebrehiwot, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
 - Mara James, Department of Finance
 - James Campbell, Co-Chair, Commission on Aging and Retirement Education
 - Olivia Farrow, Co-Chair, Commission on Aging and Retirement Education
 - Mara Romo, Board of Ethics
 - Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner of Health
 - Thomas Cudjoe
 - Reba Cornman
 - Jackie Schroeder, CHANA
 - Francine Hyman
 - Emily Fader
 - Yolanda Pulley, People Empowered for the Struggle
 - Jason Rodriguez, People Empowered for the Struggle
 - Betsy Simon, BDS Healthy Network
 - Elizabeth Briscoe
 - Clarissa Washington
-

Major Issues Discussed

1. Councilmember Middleton opened the meeting, introduced committee members and read the bill into the record. She is a sponsor of the bill. She provided general comments about the purpose of the bill. She emphasized the need for change and updated services (legal team, outreach workers, transition services, etc.) for the senior population of Baltimore.
2. Councilmember Cohen commented about the purpose of the bill. He emphasized the need for engaging services (transportation, housing, etc.) for older adults. He also wanted to work with the Health Department, other agencies and private partners to produce services that address senior needs,
3. Mary Pat Clarke testified about senior needs and the benefits of having access to resources. She supports the bill.
4. Tessa Hill-Aston testified about past initiatives to assist the aged population in Baltimore. There is a need for outreach workers. She supports the bill.
5. Sarah Matthews testified about addressing the basic needs of seniors as well as improving conditions of senior buildings. She also pointed out the need for resources at community centers. She supports the bill.
6. Ms. Joy testified about the need to address elder abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, abandonment and financial abuse).
7. Agency representatives provided reports for their respective agencies.
8. Mara James explained the Department of Finance's report. Finance supports the bill but has concerns regarding implementation. There is a concern that designation of an independent

separate different "Aging Agency" may impact federal funding sources. To establish a new, independent Office of Aging would require an additional \$950,000, mainly for positions, however, cost is not the only opposition. A major concern is the independence of the new office. The new agency would also have to match at least \$1.8 in federal and state funds.

9. Representatives from the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education testified presenting general information about its mission and current work. CARE explained concern about quality of service provided by nursing homes and small assisted living facilities.
10. Dr. Dzirasa and representatives gave a presentation outlining the Department of Health's role in providing aging and care services to Baltimore senior population. The need for services increased during the COVID epidemic. The top five senior needs are Medicare enrollment, food access, in-home care services, housing support and healthcare needs. Outreach was expanded during the pandemic. 311 Health Services for Seniors is a specialized service that needs to stay within the Department of Health.
11. Councilmembers asked agencies questions. Many seniors do not know what resources are available. Outreach and respectful service is important. There is a need for direct door-to-door outreach. Senior centers should not be the sole source relied upon for service distribution. Funding for personnel for a new Office of Aging is needed as new cabinet positions will be created. \$2.5 million is currently spent on aging services for Fiscal Year 2022, but it is not enough. American Rescue Plan funding should be directed to support senior services. There is a need to assess the quality of life of tenants and the efficiency of senior buildings. Residential services are needed. Online communication tools need to be improved to allow for better access to services. ADA compliance and FEMA assistance for certain tenants should be reviewed. An elder abuse response program is needed. The MAPS contact number is (410) 396-2273
12. The committee opened the hearing for public testimony.
13. The hearing was recessed.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes No

If yes, describe.

Committee Vote:

Sharon Green Middleton, Chair:.....
John Bullock:
Mark Conway:
Ryan Dorsey:
Antonio Glover:.....

Odette Ramos:
Robert Stokes:.....

Jennifer L. Coates, Committee Staff

Date: January 31, 2023

cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File