



**ECONOMIC  
ACTION MD**

Testimony to the Baltimore City Council  
Office of Aging-Independent Agency 22-0254  
Position: Favorable

January 31, 2023

The Honorable Nick Mosby, President  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
Cc: Baltimore City Council Members

Council President and Members of the City Council:

My name is Francine Hyman and I am the Program Director of the SOAR Program at Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition). Economic Action Maryland champions economic rights, equal opportunity, and housing justice through advocacy, research, and direct service. We are here in strong support of this legislation.

SOAR stands for Securing Older Adult Resources and our program provides screenings for Homeowners and Renters tax credits, Earned-Benefits check-ups, financial counseling and coaching as well as education and outreach to help seniors identify common scams, protect themselves from elder fraud and identity theft.

Although we work statewide, a large portion of our program work is based in Baltimore City. In fact, 45% of individuals screened for tax benefits reside in Baltimore City. The average age of our clients is 63 years of age and the average income is \$25,828. Sixty-seven percent of SOAR participants are in female-headed households and 54% of clients identify as African-American.

All of this is to say that I work closely with older adults throughout the city to help improve their economic security. Through our work, I and our SOAR counselors also learn of the challenges many of our clients face with housing and food security, adequate access to affordable health care, financial services, mental health services, recreation and physical activities, and so much more.

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The issues facing our elders are complex, interconnected, and multifaceted. For these reasons, I believe that an Office of Aging which would coordinate public and private programs and services on the issues I see SOAR clients grappling with as well as other issues would benefit our seniors. The need for oversight and coordination across these services is vital as is the need to connect and work in concert with the state Department of Aging and the state plan. We also support the establishment of a Baltimore City Commission on Aging and the make-up of the commission to support, advise, and assist the Office of Aging in its efforts.

For all these reasons, we support this legislation and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Francine Hyman  
SOAR Program Director

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