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DEPARTMENT OF AGING

Choice, Independence and Dignity for Older Marylanders

**Department of Aging - DA07
FY2016 Capital Budget**

**Testimony of
Rona E. Kramer, Esq., Secretary
Maryland Department of Aging**

**House Appropriations Committee, Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 11, 2015**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee, Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 12, 2015**

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Department of Legislative Services' (DLS) analysis of the Maryland Department of Aging's FY 2016 Capital Budget. The Department appreciates the DLS recommendation to approve funding for the Department's Capital program. The Department's response to our budget analyst's question follows.

The Secretary should comment on local demand for the Senior Center Capital Grant Program and the impediments to expanded use.

Over the past ten years (FY 2007 - FY 2016), the Department of Aging has averaged two to three Senior Center Capital Grant requests per year from local counties or municipalities. Demand for these grants fluctuates as local jurisdictions must be able to provide matching funds and secure all other funding sources prior to state consideration. The Department is aware that as more jurisdictions look to contain costs, many capital projects which were previously in consideration have been delayed or cancelled, prior to submitting an application.

Nevertheless, many jurisdictions have supported senior center capital projects to meet the increased demand for health and wellness programs and exercise classes. Senior centers remain a critical hub for Maryland's older adults for nutritional, health, social, and civic engagement. Participants and communities are recognizing the value of health promotion and disease management to both improve quality of life and reduce further health issues, thus preventing or delaying higher levels of care. Since many existing senior centers have inadequate space or facilities to accommodate such activities, local jurisdictions continue to seek capital funding.

Significant challenges remain for jurisdictions to obtain local support or other forms of matching funds. The large cost of new construction projects requires jurisdictions to provide significant investments or to seek private or foundation support. Furthermore, applicants must consider how daily operations would be impacted during the renovation as many

individuals rely on the centers for daily meals, classes, and social activities. As senior centers face increasing pressure to serve a larger population, the Department would appreciate the opportunity to discuss increasing the \$800,000 maximum per project and updating the statute to allow centers to re-apply for capital funds, as opposed to the current per-project lifetime cap.