

**STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL**

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Bill No.: Senate Bill 248– Senior Call –Check Service and Notification Program

Committee: Finance

Sponsor: Senator Middleton

Date: February 7, 2017

Position: Informational

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Senate Bill 248 would require the Department of Aging to establish, administer and adopt regulations necessary to provide a senior call check -in service to residents of the State who are at least 65 years old. The Department of Aging may contract with a private vendor or nonprofit organization to provide the service. The service would be funded through the Universal Service Trust Fund and the cost of the program may not exceed 5 cents per month for each account out of the surcharge amount authorized to fund the USTF.

A number of private companies provide similar services for a monthly fee to customers. OPC believes that several jurisdictions operate voluntary call check-in services for senior citizens in their areas. The Office of People's Counsel (OPC) understands that this Bill is targeted to assist an older population who may live alone and be medically or otherwise vulnerable, and who may not have the means to subscribe to a paid service or live in an area with a voluntary service. In that respect, the Bill has a laudable goal.

Based upon information in the Fiscal and Policy note, it appears likely that there is a sufficient fund balance in the USTF to pay for this program without directly requiring the USTF charge to increase.