

**Testimony in Support of HB 1168, Maryland Department of Health - Residential
Service Agencies - Training Requirements**

House Health and Government Operations Committee

March 5, 2020

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a voluntary, non-profit citizens' organization concerned with all aspects of behavioral health. MHAMD's Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (the Coalition) is comprised of representatives from aging, mental health, consumer, family and professional associations and government agencies working together to improve the quality and accessibility of behavioral health assessment, treatment, recovery and illness prevention services for older Marylanders. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our support for HB 1168.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementia is devastating to individuals who are afflicted. More than 110,000 Marylanders are estimated to have dementia. Many of these individuals will receive long term supports and services in their homes and communities. Because dementia causes deficits in the areas of judgment, communication, memory, mood, executive functioning, sequencing and other critical domains of brain function, it is imperative that the people providing care to individuals with dementia understand the disease and appropriate means of caring for someone who is afflicted. Without education, care providers experience high rates of frustration and burnout and they are not able to provide optimal care.

Given the high rates of cognitive impairment among those served by residential services agencies, HB 1168, requiring dementia education is an important bill to ensure workforce preparedness and competencies in the care of vulnerable adults. Residential Service Agencies owe it to their workers and their clientele to be knowledgeable about dementia and the good ones are already doing it. HB 1168 will bring others up to par.

The Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging respectfully requests your favorable report on HB 1168.