

Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigators (SB 505)

Testimony in Support of SB 505 - Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and
Dementia Care Navigators
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
February 24, 2022

FAVORABLE

TO: Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: John H Bowers

My name is John Bowers, a resident of Montgomery County, and a constituent of District 14. I am very fortunate to be represented in the Maryland State Senate by Sen. Craig Zucker (D).

I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 505 - Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigators.

Alzheimer's is a devastating disease that eventually kills. I know this first hand because I lost my mother to Alzheimer's disease. My siblings and I wanted to provide the best care over the course of her 10-year journey, but found that experience to be very difficult and frustrating.

I support this legislation, which requires an ongoing appropriation to support dementia caregiving at each of Maryland's Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), who would be mandated to create a dementia care navigation (DCN) program.

This program would be responsible for providing: support for family caregivers, including assistance with care planning and connections to support groups and education; aid in the development of dementia- friendly communities, including outreach events and professional consultations; and work to offer cognitive screenings, to help identify individuals with dementia.

This legislation is important because it presents a proven solution to aid caregivers. The 2021 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report indicates that an estimated 238,000 Marylanders – our family members and friends - are providing unpaid dementia care.

- Overall, Maryland has the third-highest percentage of adult dementia caregivers;
- Nearly 69 percent of those caregivers have chronic health conditions;
- Roughly 28 percent of them have depression; and
- More than one-third of these dementia caregivers provide over 20 hours per week in care; more than half have been providing care for at least two years.

Dementia is a cruel, complicated disease. There is no ongoing, state-specific support to help these dementia caregivers. This is a solution. I am a volunteer Alzheimer's advocate, and I urge the Committee to support SB 505, and require this initiative which will help our state's dementia caregivers.

Thank you.

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