

My name is Patricia Grimes

Thank you for inviting me to speak today on dementia caregiving and your consideration of Delegate Young and Senator King's HB 731/SB 505. Most, if not all of us, have witnessed the profound effects Alzheimer's and other dementias have on our families and communities.

As an adult home health nurse with the Johns Hopkins Home Care division, serving populations rural, urban and suburban communities in Harford & Baltimore Counties and Baltimore City I witness the struggle, hardship and inequities endured by persons caring for those diagnosed with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Lack of knowledge of available resources, lack of resource accessibility, including internet services and/or capacity to utilize IT, long telephone wait times and long wait times for appointments increase caregiver fatigue and contribute to worse health outcomes in patients and their caregivers.

Caregiver fatigue leads to selfcare deficits, loss of resiliency and contribute to stress related morbidity within the caregiver population. Ultimately, these deficits contribute to an increased fiscal burden of health care across continuums of care in Maryland.

I serve many of your constituents who have significant cognitive deficits that are under or undiagnosed. Obtaining accurate diagnosis requires primary care providers recognize signs of dementia and initiate referrals for appropriate diagnostic evaluation. Early recognition, referral and treatment are critical for mitigating health decline in patients and their caregivers.

Caregivers of undiagnosed and underdiagnosed populations are unrecognized and underserved. They are not eligible for benefits provided through Maryland's Area Agencies on Aging and are at risk for costly preventable illness, injury and hospitalization.

HB 731/SB 505, a robust legislation, paves the way to begin meeting the needs of dementia caregivers in our state.

I appreciate this opportunity to share my experience with the members of this committee and ask your support of these bills.

Respectfully,

Patricia Grimes MSN, RN
Population Based Care Coordination