

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: Lucia F Paris

My name is Lucia Paris and I am a resident of Mount Airy, MD. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 505 - Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigators.

My father who was diagnosed with vascular dementia lived in an assisted living community in Frederick. Due to the lack of trained and sufficient staff I became his fulltime primary caregiver. There were so many times I felt overwhelmed and lost due to the lack of support and resources. My stress level was so high, I often worried about my own health and not being able to care for my dad, which became a regular concern. For fifteen years I worked in dementia care and witnessed firsthand the stress and concerns of family caregivers who also experienced similar concerns.

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 - provided more than 364 million hours of 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 urge the Committee to support SB 505, and require this initiative which will help our state's dementia caregivers.

Thank you, Lucia F Paris

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