



MARYLAND COMMISSION ON CAREGIVING

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February 23, 2023

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The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 614 - Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigation Programs

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk:

The Maryland Commission on Caregiving is pleased to submit this **letter of support for HB 614 – Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigation Programs**. This bill would establish a Dementia Care Coordinator position within the Department of Aging to oversee dementia care navigation programs, standardize training and program implementation across all Area Agencies on Aging, and collect and coordinate data.

Serving as the ‘voice of the Maryland family caregiver,’ the Maryland Commission on Caregiving (“Commission”) is charged with recommending policies that positively impact family caregivers, streamlining services and programs, soliciting and responding to caregiver concerns and acknowledging their contributions. Anecdotally, caregivers share time and time again that they do not know which way to turn for resources and supports and what is even available to help them. HB 614 would achieve that for caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s and related dementia.

Currently, the Area Agencies on Aging throughout MD are doing impactful work with dementia awareness, education, and programming to include organizing support groups, memory cafes, and outreach events, but there is no consistency with program implementation across jurisdictions, and many of them, if not all, are leveraging existing staff and resources. By establishing a position of leadership within the Department of Aging and designating financial resources to its program implementation, consistency of quality can be achieved regardless of the county in which one lives. The Dementia Care Coordinator can work in tandem with the Department of Health and the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders Council to achieve the goals set forth in the MD State Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias: 2022-2026. Lastly, this bill would be the first ever state-specific appropriation in MD for dementia caregiving - following what eleven states have already done.

The Commission works to ensure that caregivers across the lifespan are equipped with the resources needed to provide safe care to their loved ones. Passage of HB 614 would support such efforts which is why the Commission respectfully urges a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Eastman

Jennifer Eastman, Chair, MD Commission on Caregiving