



Testimony in Support of SB 202, Caregiver Expense Grant Program
House Appropriations Committee
March 27, 2024, 1:00 pm
Respectfully submitted by
Dennis C. Alexander, Director of Government Relations

Chairman Barnes and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Easterseals, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 202.

Easterseals is a nonprofit organization serving Maryland (except for the Eastern Shore), Northern Virginia, and the District of Columbia, leading the way to full equity, inclusion, and access through direct and life-changing disability and community services to thousands of children and adults in our neighborhoods, regardless of their disability, military status, income, race, or age.

SB 202 would provide much needed support for Maryland family caregivers by establishing a program within the Department of Aging to provide grants of up to \$2,500 per year for these caregivers. The program would provide some financial relief for qualified expenses paid or incurred by the caregivers who provide care or support to family members. Someone being cared for must be a qualified family member and must be at least 18 years old or older. The bill requires that a caregiver must provide assistance with one or more daily living activities to the family member.

Family caregivers play an important but overlooked role in caring for family members with disabilities or chronic health conditions. It is estimated that there are 48 million family caregivers across America who provide this long-term care.

Caregivers allow their parents, spouses, or other loved ones to live independently instead of being forced into more expensive alternative living arrangements such as nursing homes or assisted living facilities. These dedicated family caregivers provide \$600 billion worth of unpaid labor each year—managing medications, preparing meals, helping with bathing, feeding, and dressing, providing transportation to medical appointments, and handling financial and legal matters. Most of the people doing all this unpaid work are also trying to juggle their own jobs, too, and many are forced to reduce their hours or quit entirely. Caregivers save Maryland taxpayers countless dollars that would otherwise be spent on caring for individuals in need of special, daily assistance.

The physical, emotional, and financial toll on family caregivers is enormous and the grant program established by SB 202 would provide some relief and reduce the stress placed on family members who care for their loved ones in their homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important bill and I respectfully request that you act favorably on it.