



Bill: HB 36 - Department of Aging - Aging Services - Program Repeal and Consolidation

Committee: Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

Date: January 23, 2025

On behalf of the 127,200 Marylanders living with Alzheimer's disease and their 247,000 caregivers, the Alzheimer's Association supports *HB 36 - Department of Aging - Aging Services - Program Repeal and Consolidation*. This bill will consolidate three state-funded Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) programs that support older adults - the Senior Care program, the Senior Assisted Living Subsidy, and the Congregate Housing Services.

Dementia is a progressive disease, where symptoms gradually worsen over a number of years and individuals will eventually need assistance with daily activities. People living with Alzheimer's or other dementia generally receive care from family members and other unpaid caregivers. Many also receive long-term care services at home; in adult day centers, assisted living residences or nursing homes; or in more than one of these settings at different times during the often long course of the disease.

The services offered through MDOA's programs help low- to moderate-income older adults, including those living with dementia, live at home longer, provide respite to their caregivers, or provide financial aid for living in an assisted living facility. These programs save the State money as the majority of the services allow individuals to live at home longer, rather than moving to a long-term care facility.

As we look to the future, the State needs to be ready to help our growing older adult population. MDOA's programs have been supporting older adults for decades, including providing vital gap-filling for individuals on the waitlist for Medicaid services. HB 36 is one step in the right direction to supporting more older adults by creating efficiencies through streamlining processes and reducing administrative burden to effectively serve more older Marylanders.

There is demand for these services, with 1,999 individuals on the Senior Care waitlist as of September 30, 2024.¹ Many Marylanders currently receiving these services have waited years to become eligible, and it is important that the transition is completed thoughtfully to ensure that all eligible clients are smoothly transitioned. The Alzheimer's Association looks forward to providing feedback on future regulations and department guidelines to help with this transition and update to its programs. The Alzheimer's Association urges a favorable report on HB 36. Please contact Megan Peters, Director of Government Affairs at mrpeters@alz.org with any questions.

¹ 2024 Joint Chairmen's Report (p. 29) Report on Senior Care Funding Adequacy.
https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2024/2024_29.pdf