



**Bill:** HB 158 - Department of Aging - Social Connections Program - Establishment

**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 158 - Department of Aging - Social Connections Program - Establishment*. This bill will expand the communications and services options for Maryland's Senior Call Check Service and Notification Program.

Maryland's Senior Call Check Program serves over 2,000 Marylanders age 65 and older. Each day, a phone call goes out to participants to make sure they are okay. HB 158 will expand the current phone call service to include live and virtual web- and text-based communications, as well as possible in-person service options. Additionally, the updates will allow for supporting older adults with communications disabilities and limited English proficiency. These updates provide opportunities for more purposeful social engagement that has the opportunity to better address needs and reduce social isolation. It is important to reduce social isolation in older adults as studies show that loneliness and social isolation are associated with higher risks for health problems such as heart disease, depression, and cognitive decline.<sup>1</sup>

Call check programs also have the opportunity to allow for monitoring of any noticeable changes, such as cognitive decline, that may need more direct intervention and support. The updates in Maryland's program, especially the opportunity for live based communications will provide more comprehensive and informed assessments of participant's personal welfare.

Lastly, call check programs can be helpful for people living with dementia, primarily for those in the early stages of the disease and who are living alone. These calls can provide a regular point of contact, help to monitor well-being, and offer peace of mind to both the individual living with dementia and their caregivers who may be living elsewhere.

The Alzheimer's Association urges a favorable report on HB 158. Please contact Megan Peters, Director of Government Affairs at [mrpeters@alz.org](mailto:mrpeters@alz.org) with any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Aging - Loneliness and Social Isolation - Tips for Staying Connected.  
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/loneliness-and-social-isolation/loneliness-and-social-isolation-tips-staying-connected>