

February 24, 2026

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 60,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

NAMI Maryland is dedicated to building better lives for Marylanders affected by mental illness. A core pillar of our mission is minimizing justice-system response to people with mental illness while ensuring that any unavoidable interactions preserve the health, well-being, and dignity of the individual.

HB634 helps achieve these goals by requiring the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to offer specialized training regarding individuals with dementia and autism. This legislation is a critical step forward because it promotes de-escalation and re-unification.

By adding specific training for interactions with individuals with dementia, we are ensuring that our State law enforcement officers are equipped to handle the nuance of this condition. In equipping officers with the tools they need to recognize and respond appropriately to these vulnerable populations, Maryland can reduce the risk of tragic encounters.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Stephanie Slowly-Little
Executive Director
National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland

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