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February 13, 2026

The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett
Chair, Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 634 – Police Training – Autism and Dementia (LEAD Act of 2026)

Dear Madam Chair,

The Maryland Commission on Caregiving is pleased to support HB 634 – Police Training – Autism and Dementia (LEAD Act of 2026).

This bill requires entrance-level and in-service police training on interacting with individuals with dementia and autism, including locating those who are wandering or missing, using sensory-aware approaches, facilitating reunification, coordinating with other agencies, and searching near bodies of water. These measures directly support caregivers by ensuring first responders can protect and safely assist vulnerable loved ones in high-risk situations.

Serving as the “voice of the Maryland family caregiver,” the Commission advocates for policies that support family caregivers and acknowledge their contributions. According to AARP’s Caregiving in the U.S. 2025, approximately 1.16 million Maryland residents provide unpaid care to a loved one¹, many of whom face safety risks, including wandering, eloping, or otherwise missing.

The Commission strongly supports HB 634 because specialized police training reduces risk, facilitates timely reunification, and strengthens collaboration between families and public safety officials. By supporting this bill, Maryland is proactively protecting some of its most vulnerable residents while supporting the family caregivers who provide essential daily care for these individuals.

Sincerely,

The Maryland Commission on Caregiving

¹ AARP Maryland, “New Data Show 24% of Adults in Maryland Provide Care, Spotlighting Urgent Need for Action to Support Family Caregivers,” October 28, 2025), <https://www.aarp.org/states/maryland/cus-md-2025/>