

Chair Pinsky and Vice Chair Kagan,

My name is Nancy Rodriguez-Weller, and I am here today to speak in support of Senate Bill 313.

I am a long-time resident of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, living in Salisbury. I am an assistant professor at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne. I am also a Senior Care Consultant Pharmacist and a member of Maryland's Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Council.

On a very personal note, both my grandmother and father were diagnosed with dementia. My first exposure to dementia occurred when I was 12 years old when I met my grandmother for the first time. Many years later, my father passed away at the age of 92 years old with the same disease.

We do not have a cure for dementia but we, now know, that early detection is key to managing this disease. Some of the signs and symptoms of dementia rely on the patient or family member reporting or initiating a conversation about the changes in mood and difficulty coping with activities of daily life.

This bill in question recommends pulling all our resources together to work together. Living in the Eastern Shore, there are many disparities; people in rural areas, African American and Hispanic cultures that would benefit from this outreach. There are few resources provided to our older adults and their family members in our area.

As an educator, I volunteer my services at our local gyms, and older adult centers so I can educate our community on the effects of this disease. A coordinated outreach plan on dementia would especially benefit those who do not recognize the early symptoms of this disease. This is key to individuals and family members who are impacted physically and financially.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this legislation.

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