

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
SB 13 – Certified Nursing Assistants – Certificate Renewal – Training Program Requirements
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Pinsky and Vice Chair Kagan,

My name is Eric Colchamiro, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Alzheimer's Association in Maryland. I am here today to issue my strong support for SB 13.

Our organization applauds Senator Eckardt for her ongoing focus on the healthcare workforce; we are, along with Senator Eckardt, active members of the Oversight Committee for the Quality of Care in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities. [In the Oversight Committee's 2020 annual report](#), Senator Eckardt's insights were instrumental in that Committee's recommendation that, "there is a broader opportunity for the Maryland Board of Nursing to work with the long-term care industry on measures such as expedited credentialing of entry-level staff for safe practice, to allow a greater number of individuals to receive CNA and GNA training."

There is a shortage of nurses in Maryland; a [2018 University of Maryland Working Group on this issue noted](#) that Maryland is one of four states that will experience a shortage of 10,000 or more registered nurses (RNs) by 2025.

For Alzheimer's and dementia patients, who often live in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, getting more and qualified nurses has been especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic – where this essential direct care staff can be sidelined by coming into contact with someone with COVID. Our organization has, and will continue to applaud Governor Hogan, for his steps to address staffing during this crisis – including deploying 'bridge teams' of nurses and health aides, to further address the staffing shortages.

Yet the COVID crisis has heightened a recruitment, retention and training problem that existed long before this pandemic. Staff work in multiple long-term care facilities, often due to low pay, and because facilities need the help. And facilities—including memory care units, which treat the most vulnerable patients with Alzheimer's and dementia—need to have adequate staff, in terms of what is required and what is available to them, so that Marylanders can get better care.

We need to implement cost-effective strategies, as SB 13 suggests, to sustain both the quantity and quality of this workforce. We applaud this legislation, and urge a favorable report.