

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
SB 275 - Maryland Department of Health - Residential Service Agencies -Training Requirements
Position: Favorable

Chair Kelley and Vice-Chair Feldman

My name is Eric Colchamiro, and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Alzheimer's Association in Maryland. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony about SB 275, legislation which requires Residential Service Agencies (RSAs) to provide dementia training to their workers.

Dementia-specific training is essential for providing quality care to Marylanders with Alzheimer's Disease or other forms of dementia. Individuals with Alzheimer's have specific needs, including the 95 percent of them who have at least one other chronic condition, which complicates their care. Over time, people with Alzheimer's will often lose their ability to use words, which presents added challenges for care workers. This legislation requires this workforce to have dementia-specific knowledge, and in turn, invests in the future of this workforce.

The bill sets a vital baseline to train Maryland's RSA direct care staff who work with individuals with Alzheimer's or other dementia, and their supervisors. It allows time for a training to be developed, and beginning in July of 2022, requires at least three hours of initial training and two hours of continuing education training for staff and supervisors. It recognizes logistical and financial concerns of providers, and allows the training to be provided online or by an appropriate supervisory staff member. It also notes that if a trained individual changes home care employer, they have the option to not have to complete the training at a new organization, as long as they have sustained dementia related direct care or supervisory work.

I want to thank Senator Hester, co-sponsor Senator Hayes, and so many of you on this committee who have shared your personal connection with me about the cruel disease of dementia, Thank you also to the Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association (MNCHA) for their support of this bill. I appreciate MNCHA and its Executive Director Dawn Seek—who serves on the statewide Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Council—along with Dawn's membership, who employ a workforce essential to Maryland before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

I urge a favorable report on the bill, to create a more dementia-capable workforce, and aid some of our most vulnerable Marylanders.