

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters  
**SB 707 – Office of Health Care Quality – Influenza Virus Immunization Education and Information – Assisted Living Facilities**  
**Position: Favorable**

Chair Kelley and Vice-Chair Feldman,

I am Eric Colehamiro, Director of Government Affairs for the Alzheimer's Association in Maryland, and here to ask for your support of SB 707. This legislation requires the Maryland Department of Health's Office of Healthcare Quality (OHCQ) to monitor the compliance of assisted living facilities with requirements to provide educational and informational materials relating to immunization against influenza virus and immunization against pneumococcal disease during its annual inspection.

The Alzheimer's Association, a member of Maryland's Oversight Committee for the Quality of Care in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living facilities, has long been concerned about the long-term care industry. Over 40 percent of the residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities have Alzheimer's or another dementia. More than 95 percent of those residents have another chronic condition; their care is complicated.

Maryland's 1680 assisted living facilities (ALFs) are spread out across our state. 1545 of these ALFs, or 92 percent of them, have fewer than 50 beds. Yet the remaining eight percent have the majority of our state's patient population. Additionally, while OHCQ is required to inspect all ALFs on an annual basis, they have long lagged behind in this responsibility; as of February 23<sup>rd</sup>, of this year, the last data publicly available from OHCQ shows that just 71 percent of annual inspections were completed for FY 2019 [following a 51 percent inspection rate for FY 2018 and a 48 percent inspection rate for FY 2017].

Amidst a COVID-19 pandemic that has disproportionately impacted Maryland's long-term care industry, we must move forward stabilizing these essential providers and improving the quality of care for their residents. This bill takes a step with a small cost but a potentially big impact for residents; it requires OHCQ, in its existing annual inspection of assisted living facilities, to monitor whether these providers are offering—per law—educational and informational materials about the importance of getting your flu and pneumonia shots.

This is a practical measure to aid seniors and our system of long-term care. In particular, for Maryland's 1288 assisted living providers with 10 or fewer beds, their resources to comply with this essential, existing state law may be stretched thin. While larger assisted living facilities may have the means to bring in medical providers on a regular basis, a two-person facility in Belcamp or an eight-person facility in Accokeek likely would not have the resources to have on site medical care to educate and inform residents. Additionally, existing state law only requires ALFs to have a nurse on site once every 45 days. As a result, much of the existing compliance with this law may be a piece of paper which never gets read or distributed.

This legislation takes a small step to make that process of educating and informing assisted living residents, including those living with Alzheimer's or other dementia, a lot better. It potentially reduces the spread of communicable disease. And it works toward a better standard of care amidst Maryland's many assisted living providers. I ask for a favorable report.