

Senate Bill 275 Maryland Department of Health – Residential Service Agencies – Training Requirements

Senate Finance Committee

February 4, 2021

Position: Support

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is the state's only volunteer, nonprofit citizen's organization that brings together consumers, families, professionals, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and mental illness. Our Coalition on Mental Health and Aging is comprised of representatives from aging, mental health, consumer, family and professional associations, and government agencies all working together to improve the quality and accessibility of behavioral health assessment, treatment, recovery and illness prevention services for older Marylanders. We appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 275, Residential Service Agencies – Training Requirements.

SB 275 requires initial and annual continuing education training for residential service agency (RSA) staff about Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. Training would include an overview of Alzheimer's disease and dementia, person-centered care, an understanding of the assessment and care planning process, activities of daily living, and related behaviors and communication. MHAMD believes that these trainings are critical to supporting front line staff working directly with older adults who are facing increasing incidences of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementia is currently afflicting 110,000 Marylanders, and impacts Black and Latinx communities at twice the rate of white communities.¹ This is not a genetic difference but rather one of structural racism – studies show that when adjusting for health and socioeconomic factors, the racial differences in Alzheimer's prevalence is significantly reduced.² Additionally, Black and Latinx older adults are often diagnosed in the later stages of the disease, requiring more intensive and costly levels of care.³

Increasing the training and understanding of this growing public health concern among RSA staff is an important step in addressing this undue racial disparity. Alzheimer's disease and related dementia has claimed 1,200 lives in 2019, and costs Medicaid 1.16 billion dollars annually. This health crisis is projected to grow by 18% in the next five years, and the burden of

¹ Alzheimer's Association. *Race, Ethnicity, and Alzheimer's*. March, 2020.

https://www.alz.org/aaic/downloads2020/2020_Race_and_Ethnicity_Fact_Sheet.pdf

² Chen, C., & Zissimopoulos, J. M. (2018). Racial and ethnic differences in trends in dementia prevalence and risk factors in the United States. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 4, 510–520. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trci.2018.08.009>

³ Alzheimer's Association. *Race, Ethnicity, and Alzheimer's*. March, 2020.

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Alzheimer's disease and related dementias is expected to double by 2060 according to the CDC, with Black and Brown communities expected to face the greatest burden of this increase.⁴

Mental Health Association of Maryland supports the legislature's goal of requiring evidence-based dementia training for all those who serve individuals with dementia, and implementing culturally-competent curriculum that incorporates principles of person-centered care. We appreciate the opportunity to offer support on this bill, and respectfully urge this committee to pass Senate Bill 275.

⁴ Matthews KA, Xu W, Gaglioti AH, et al. (2019). *Racial and ethnic estimates of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in the United States (2015-2060) in adults aged ≥65 years*. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 15(1):17-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jalz.2018.06.3063>