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SPEAKER PRO TEM  
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Health and Government  
Operations Committee



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY FOR HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
COMMITTEE**

**CHAIR SHANE PENDERGRASS**  
**VICE CHAIR JOSELINE PENA-MELNYK**

**HOUSE BILL 119: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – PUBLIC HEALTH  
OUTREACH PROGRAMS – COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT, ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE,  
AND OTHER TYPES OF DEMENTIA**

**January 19, 2021**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Thank you Madam Chair and Members of the Committee. Today, I am pleased to introduce HB 119, Maryland Department of Public Health – Public Health Outreach Programs – Cognitive Impairment, Alzheimer’s Disease, and Other Types of Dementia.

I ask for your support of this bill, which would mandate that the Department of Health—in partnership with the Department of Aging, the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders Council, and the Alzheimer’s Association—incorporate messaging about Alzheimer’s and related dementia into its relevant public health outreach programs, which work with providers and Marylanders statewide. This legislation has many important provisions, including improved outreach to providers, but I want to focus my comments today on its potential to improve health disparities.

Alzheimer’s and related dementia is a disease that African Americans are twice as likely to have as Caucasians, and Latinos are one-and-a-half times as likely to have than Caucasians. This legislation makes it clear that a priority of the General Assembly is the reduction of Alzheimer’s and related dementia, specifically among communities that are more at risk of these diseases and are generally neglected. We know we have a Health Department which is a trusted source of information, and there are relevant public outreach campaigns it can utilize to reduce the incidences of this disease and improve cognitive health. This bill makes sure the Department is using those campaigns to their full capacity.

I have taken on this bill because as a caregiver for my mother who experiences the cruel effects of dementia on a daily basis, as an African-American whose community is at increased risk of this disease, and as a Marylander saddened that over 100,000 of us have this disease, I know all

too well how a lack of information can harm victims and their families. This bill received a favorable report from the Committee last year and passed the house unanimously, but was unfortunately not heard in the Senate because of the pandemic. Again, I would like to thank the Committee for hearing the bill, and I urge a favorable report on HB 119.