

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
HB 305 – Public Safety – Task Force on Missing Persons
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Clippinger and Vice-Chair Atterbeary,

My name is Eric Colchamiro, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Alzheimer's Association in Maryland. I wanted to testify today to issue our organization's strong support for HB 305.

This legislation establishes the Task Force on Missing Persons to study best practices for conducting searches for missing persons, including representation from the Alzheimer's Association's Greater Maryland chapter. The task force also is to consider the options for the establishment of a State Coordinator for Missing Persons to serve as a point of contact for the families of missing persons. It specifies the composition of the Task Force, including representation from the Alzheimer's Association, and requires recommendations to policymakers by June 30, 2023.

The Alzheimer's Association is pleased to support this important legislation, as we work to reduce the incidence and impact of Alzheimer's and other dementia among the over 110,000 Marylanders with this disease. Anyone who has memory problems and is able to walk is at risk for wandering, and 60 percent of people with dementia will wander.

Our statewide advocacy seeks to reduce the risk of wandering, and the potential for missing people, through advocating for a workforce appropriately trained in dementia care. And our programmatic initiatives seek to help individuals with Alzheimer's or other dementia, and teach them and their caregivers strategies to prevent wandering, including:

- Carry out daily activities. Having a daily routine can provide structure;
- Identify the most likely times of day that wandering may occur. Activities during that time can reduce anxiety, agitation and restlessness; and
- Reassure the person if he or she feels lost, abandoned or disoriented. If the person with dementia wants to leave to "go home" or "go to work," use communication focused on exploration and validation.

The Association offers a number of services and resources to support families. Information about these resources is available by calling our Helpline, 24/7, at 1- 800-272-3900.

We urge a favorable report for this legislation.