

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
SB 27 Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia - Council and Coordination of Services (Dementia Services Act of 2022)
Position: Favorable

Chair Kelley and Vice Chair Feldman:

My name is Ana Nelson, and I am Vice President for Programs at the Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area (NCA) chapter. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 27, legislation to create and provide funding for a Director of Dementia Services Coordination at the Maryland Department of Health.

I want to start my testimony by thanking the bill sponsor, Senator Augustine, for his leadership on this issue and for his service on the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Council. He represents Dementia Friendly Prince George's County. Dementia friendly is about raising awareness, transforming attitudes, and supporting caregivers, and families. The Prince George's County Department of Family Services—under the leadership of former County Executive Baker and current County Executive Alsobrooks—has been awarded a federal Dementia Capable Grant from the Administration for Community Living to provide support for caregivers of people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The County will train 200 caregivers using the evidenced-based "Powerful Tools for Caregivers" and establish a 24/7 protocol for its hotline. The grant also funds education, outreach and referrals. The grant establishes a resiliency fund for emergency gap services. The Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter is pleased to collaborate with the County Department of Family Services in support of this grant.

Existing Maryland counties with coordinated efforts include Montgomery County and Baltimore County. However, there is not any state position to manage and facilitate communication relating to dementia services. Today 110,000 people are living with Alzheimer's in Maryland. The state spent \$1.2 billion Medicaid dollars on this chronic disease in 2020. A State Director of Dementia Services Coordination is needed to address Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

This State Director could also apply for grants. One of these grant opportunities is the CDC's "Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act" grant. The bill creates an Alzheimer's public health infrastructure for the country to implement effective Alzheimer's interventions focusing on public health issues.

We must coordinate all agencies & sectors to address Alzheimer's and other dementia statewide. It is time for Maryland to join those states that have a Director of Dementia Services Coordination in state government. This Director would disseminate information on services and programs. This position would support and identify the development of dementia specific training. This position would coordinate service and activates of state and local agencies, service providers, first responders, law enforcement, and other state entities that engage those with dementia and caregivers such as the Alzheimer's Association, the Area Agency on Aging, and Adult Protective Services. This person would optimize the use of limited resources.

The NCA Chapter is pleased to work with George Worthington, Virginia's Dementia Services Coordinator, who is here today to share his work. We also engage with Tihitina Chamiso, the District's Dementia Services Coordinator at the DC Health Department. In just one and a half years, the District launched a public awareness campaign and a website where dementia services are listed. Maryland can too, and the Alzheimer's Association is here to help. But, first we must build out the infrastructure.

I urge a favorable report on this legislation.