

Testimony in Support of HB 166 “Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia - Council and Coordination of Services (Dementia Services Act of 2022).”

Maryland House Health and Government Operations Committee February 3, 2022

FAVORABLE

TO: Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: John H. Bowers

My name is John Bowers, and I am a resident of Montgomery County, and a District 14 constituent. I am very fortunate to be represented on the HGO Committee by Del. Anne Kaiser.

I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 166, the Dementia Services Act of 2022, which at its core creates a Director of Dementia Services Coordination at the Maryland Department of Health.

In 2013 I lost my mother to Alzheimer’s disease. Her decline during the preceding 10 years was made even more challenging, as her primary care physician was not adequately-prepared to evaluate, diagnose, and discuss her symptoms with my mother and father, their fear of societal stigma in their small community, and multiple crises during her care in assisted-living and nursing home settings, due to a dearth of dementia-trained direct care workers.

The Dementia Services Act of 2022 would establish and mandate funding for a full-time Director of Dementia Services Coordination at the Maryland Department of Health. The position will be responsible for the coordination of services affecting Marylanders with dementia and their caregivers and families, including: implementing the Maryland Alzheimer’s state plan, managing the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders Council; identifying and supporting the development of dementia-specific training; and applying for grants to expand and improve services for Marylanders with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers.

There is precedent for this position; if enacted, Maryland’s point person on dementia would join similar roles in 16 other states, including Virginia and the District of Columbia. This role would work, across government, to aid the 110,000 Marylanders with dementia and their loved ones. Our state spends over \$1.2 billion in Medicaid funding on this chronic disease; it is essential that we begin to build our infrastructure to help Marylanders in need.

The potential for this legislation is significant, in how it can help Marylanders, if we devote the resources and build the infrastructure to address dementia.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 166. We spend over a billion dollars on this disease, and it is time for Maryland to have a point person specifically working to end Alzheimer’s and other dementia.

Thank you,

John H. Bowers
Volunteer Alzheimer’s Advocate
ALZ Impact Movement