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TO: Finance Committee

FROM: LeadingAge Maryland

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 228, Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigation Programs

DATE: February 9, 2023

POSITION: Favorable

LeadingAge Maryland supports Senate Bill 228, Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigation Programs.

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 140 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Our mission is to expand the world of possibilities for aging in Maryland. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, public agencies, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland.

This bill establishes the position of Dementia Care Coordinator in the Department of Aging to oversee dementia care navigation programs. The Coordinator is required to train the staff of dementia care navigation programs, disseminate best practices and submit a report, by October 1, 2024 and each year thereafter, to the Governor, the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate on the services provided. The work of the dementia care coordinator and the dementia care navigation programs must be guided by the recommendations of the state plan on aging and the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Council. Each area agency shall establish a dementia care navigation program.

The duties of the dementia care navigation program include:

- providing cognitive assessment for individuals with dementia;
- providing programs that engage individuals with dementia in regular exercise and social activities;
- providing support for caregivers of individuals with dementia, including providing assistance with care planning and referral to support groups;
- considering the development of dementia-friendly communities to provide civic awareness and dementia-capable emergency response;

- consulting with and providing technical assistance to area agency staff who interact with individuals with dementia diagnoses or cognitive changes associated with dementia.
- establishing relationships with health care providers and facilitating contact between health care providers and individuals with dementia; and caregivers of individuals with dementia.

Family caregivers serve a critical role, and often need information about community resources, specialists, mental health supports, and services like home care, adult day care, assisted living, and nursing homes. While there are some existing options for resources, like privately paid senior care navigators, the Alzheimer's Association, or primary care offices, there are not central access points where the individual on the other end of the phone has specific knowledge about the unique needs of those living with dementia and their families. This legislation could prove essential in providing a single point of contact for caregivers to help them better navigate the complex and often difficult to find resources and supports.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 228.

For additional information, please contact Aaron J. Greenfield, 410.446.1992