

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
SB 387 - Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times
Position: Favorable with Amendments

Chair Griffith and Vice Chair Klausmeier,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 387, which establishes the Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times to study best practices for reducing emergency department wait times; and requires the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2024.

This Alzheimer's Association supports amendments to this legislation which would:

- Broaden the membership of this Task Force, to ensure both a diversity of hospital perspectives and more consumer and patient advocacy group representation, so that industry and patients/consumers are equally represented;
- Consider the availability of care options for after hospitalization, and the barriers to accessing that care, including the need for effective care coordination.

There are a lot of reasons why people wait a long time for an emergency room bed. The answer differs between urban and rural settings. It is also a supply of beds and demand for those beds question. And—particularly for people living with Alzheimer's and related dementia—it may have to do with the need for improved care coordination, so that they can be effectively and safely placed back in their home (if possible), or a long-term care facility. Yet unfortunately, that care coordination does not always happen, and it does not always happen efficiently; in these instances, ineffective discharge planning can limit the supply of ER beds and lead to an increased ER wait time.

All told, this matters for the 110,000 Marylanders living with Alzheimer's and other dementias along with their over 242,000 caregivers. Our Alzheimer's Association's 2018 data showed that there is 1524 emergency department visits in Maryland per 1000 people with dementia. And the same data shows that there is a 24.4 percent hospital readmission rate for individuals with dementia in Maryland.ⁱ And of course, when ineffective discharge planning leads to readmission, the limited supply of beds is further exacerbated.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. This legislation, if amended, reflects an opportunity for change to help Marylanders. The Alzheimer's Association asks for a favorable with amendments report.

ⁱ <https://www.alz.org/media/documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>