

SB 228 - Favorable

Testimony of Etolia Biggs, Alzheimer's advocate and caregiver

Good afternoon Chair Griffith and Vice Chair Klausmeier, my name is Etolia Biggs and I live in Baltimore County.

I am an advocate for the bill entitled **Department of Aging – Dementia Care Navigation Programs** because I am a caregiver for my mother who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2016.

Although I work remotely full time, I need assistance in caring for my mom during the daytime working hours. After my workday ends around 5pm, and the aide or my sister leaves for the day – if I had help for the day; I start (or continue) my 2nd fulltime job - caring for my mother.

Mom used to work as a private in-home aide and that was her passion. Now mom needs an aide. Everyday is like Groundhog Day for her. She doesn't remember what happened yesterday, let alone an hour or 10 minutes ago. Somedays mom look me in right my eyes and asks, "Where's Etolia?"

Caregiving is a labor of love that brings many challenges. It impacts my mental, physical and social life. In this short time, I have experienced many occasions of physical and mental burnout. Whether mom is calling me at repeatedly 3am because she thinks it's time to get up for breakfast or whether she's going to the bathroom at 6am – and I'm changing the already wet linen and pads so she can go back to sleep in a dry bed, there's never a dull moment.

We were fortunate to connect with Baltimore County Dept of Aging to help navigate the system to identify resources. But not every Aging department has this kind of help. The Governor talks about "leaving no one behind", and well, if I did not live in Baltimore County I would probably be left behind as a caregiver.

It would be great to see this bill fully funded to provide resources to assist dementia caregivers across the state with support, outreach and help connecting to respite care.

Thank you.