

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
SB 555 – Fair Wage Act
Position: Favorable

Chair Griffith and Vice Chair Klausmeier,

The Alzheimer's Association – representing the over 110,000 Marylanders with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, along with their caregivers – is here today in strong support of Senate Bill 555, the Fair Wage Act. This legislation increases the State minimum wage rate in effect for certain periods of time; increases, except under certain circumstances, the State minimum wage rate in effect for certain periods of time based on annual growth in a certain consumer price index; alters the authority of the Board of Public Works to temporarily suspend an increase in the minimum wage rate; and repeals the requirement that the Governor's budgets for certain fiscal years include certain provider rate increases.

There are over 110,000 Marylanders with Alzheimer's and dementia in Maryland. As we understand more about this cruel disease—and what contributes to it—recent research has shown that lower socioeconomic status in childhood, and persistently low wages, is linked to a risk for dementia and faster memory decline.¹

- Individuals who experience high socioeconomic deprivation — measured using income/wealth, unemployment rates, car/home ownership and household overcrowding — are significantly more likely to develop dementia compared to individuals of better socioeconomic status, even at high genetic risk.
- Lower-quality neighborhood resources and difficulty paying for basic needs were associated with lower scores on cognitive tests among Black and Latino individuals.
- Higher parental socioeconomic status was associated with increased resilience to the negative effects of Alzheimer's marker ptau-181, better baseline executive function and slower cognitive decline in older age.
- Compared with workers earning higher wages, sustained low-wage earners experienced significantly faster memory decline in older age.

A solution for this is this bill, and a solution for this bill is higher wages. The Alzheimer's Association thanks the Governor for pushing this forward, and urges a favorable report.

¹ https://aaic.alz.org/releases_2022/lower-socioeconomic-dementia-risk.asp