

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters  
**SB 228 - Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigation Programs**  
Position: Favorable

Chair Griffith and Vice Chair Klausmeier,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you in support of Senate Bill 228, which as amended, creates an outreach program at each of Maryland's local area agencies on aging. Senator Beidle has provided an outline of this legislation, and you will hear personal stories today from dementia caregivers. As such, I want to focus my testimony about why this bill is necessary and how it reflects listening to and the concerns of local jurisdictions.

This legislation is necessary because dementia caregivers need the help. It is a disease which gets progressively worse, and it takes a toll on our caregivers. 68.8 % of our caregivers have chronic health conditions themselves, 27.7% of them have depression, and 13.6% of them are in poor physical health. Yet, statewide, we have \$0 in dementia-specific funds to help them, unlike 11 other states. We are leaving Maryland residents behind.

This bill has also been developed, over the interim, after listening to the state and our counties. Senator Beidle outlined certain areas, and I will just add a few more:

- Money. In 2022, the state asked for more money to administer this legislation. In 2023, if you deduct what the agency said they needed to administer the program, it leaves on average of over \$100,000 to be distributed to each Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Anne Arundel County has a outreach program right now, which they administer through federal funds. Their budget is roughly \$100,000.
- Why this is doable. I understand, from having talked with many area agencies on aging, that some of them do not want a new initiative to do (or even might want this to be an optional). New things are not always popular; yet dementia caregivers—unlike 11 other states—do not have any state specific funding to help them navigate this extremely complex disease.
  - Specifically, in Wisconsin, which pioneered an outreach program to dementia caregivers over a decade ago, state staff and trained volunteers conduct thousands of cognitive screenings each year—among other responsibilities—to help residents in need and aid their caregivers. You have testimony in your packet from Joy Schmidt, a dementia care specialist in Dane, Wisconsin, which speaks to their initiative. It is everyday people, and not doctors or clinicians, who staff their initiative, conduct cognitive screenings and so much more, and help residents in need.
  - This proposed initiative is manageable. In 2023, the legislation has been amended to allow the state to coordinate this work from existing resources. It requires solely a program at AAAs, and not for them to hire a staffer. And it asks the Department of Aging to listen to the needs of local AAAs and distribute the funding accordingly. For some counties, that means they will not need a full-time person and might get less than \$100,000. For others, they will get more. But it is intentionally less of a burden on those tasked with implementing the outreach.
- Effectiveness A December 2021 study of patient navigation programs for people with dementia found collaborative dementia care management provided increased benefits at decreased costs.<sup>i</sup> Care navigation programs work in Wisconsin, and it will work in Maryland. It saves money and helps people in need. Because our over 242,000 unpaid dementia caregivers need help.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. This legislation, as amended, reflects conversations with numerous local aging departments and the state. It reflects consensus. It is proven to save money and help caregivers who need a commitment from this state to navigate an awful disease. I urge a favorable report.

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK571668/>



## MARYLAND ALZHEIMER'S STATISTICS\*

Maryland has **242,000** unpaid caregivers.

These caregivers provided **371,000,000** hours of unpaid care to someone with dementia.

**68.8%** of caregivers have chronic health conditions.

**27.7%** of caregivers have depression.

**13.6%** of caregivers are in poor physical health.

**One-third** of caregivers provide over 20 hours per week in care.

**More than half** have been providing care for at least two years.



**GREATER MARYLAND CHAPTER  
NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA CHAPTER**

*\*For more information, view the 2022 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at [alz.org/facts](https://www.alz.org/facts).*

## DEMENTIA CARE NAVIGATION PROGRAM

HB 614/SB 228 creates an outreach program to aid dementia caregivers statewide via each of Maryland's Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), and provides significant funding to the Maryland Department of Aging to administer this program and distribute to local jurisdictions.

- This initiative will provide aid to caregivers and their loved ones with symptoms of dementia, including: assistance with care planning, including referrals to primary care providers and specialists; connections to support groups and education; and help to offer cognitive screenings, to identify individuals with dementia.
- Nobody is left behind. Each AAA is to work with families whose loved ones have symptoms of dementia, which interfere with activities of daily living. As such, even if they do not have a formal diagnosis of dementia or may have a co-occurring behavioral health condition, they can still be helped.
- Smaller jurisdictions matter. The Maryland Department of Aging would be required to distribute funding to each AAA, based on their assessment of the needs of each jurisdiction. While a baseline amount for each jurisdiction is not codified into law, this legislation encourages an inclusive approach toward funding.
- Maryland currently has no state-specific funding for dementia caregivers. Other states with funding include: Georgia; Idaho; Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, New York; Tennessee, Vermont and Wisconsin.

**Lead Sponsors: Delegate Bonnie Cullison (Montgomery County) and Senator Pamela Beidle (Anne Arundel County)**