



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 9, 2023

SB 228

**Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care  
Navigation Programs**

**Senate Finance Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**Senate Bill 228** establishes the position of Dementia Care Coordinator in the Department of Aging to oversee dementia care navigation programs. The bill requires the Coordinator to train the staff of dementia care navigation programs, and to disseminate best practices and submit a report by October 1, 2024 (and each year thereafter) to the Governor, Speaker of the House, and President of the Senate on the services provided. The bill also requires the Department to publish a report on their website, and mandates yearly appropriations in the Governor's Budget for the management of the programs.

Senate Bill 228 mandates that each area agency shall establish a Dementia Care Navigation Program. The area agency is the local agency that the Department designates to administer the delivery of a comprehensive and coordinated plan of social and other services and activities for seniors in a planning and service area. The duties of the Dementia Care Navigation Program include: (1) providing cognitive assessment for individuals with Dementia; (2) providing programs that engage individuals with Dementia in regular exercise and social activities; (3) providing support for caregivers of individuals with Dementia, including providing assistance with care planning and referral to support groups; (4) considering the development of Dementia-friendly communities to provide civic awareness and Dementia-capable emergency response; (5) consulting with and providing technical assistance to area agency staff who interact with specific individuals; (6) establishing relationships with health care providers and

facilitating contact between health care providers and individuals with Dementia, as well with the caregivers of individuals with Dementia; and (7) providing any other appropriate services.

According to the Maryland Department of Health, Alzheimer's disease is the seventh leading cause of death among older residents. The Maryland Department of Health has stated Alzheimer's disease and other dementias represent an urgent, high burden, and high-cost public health crisis. An estimated 110,000 Maryland residents over age 65 are living with Dementia, a number that is expected to increase 18% to 130,000 by 2025. Care for individuals with Dementia accounts for more than \$1.2 billion in annual Medicaid spending, with costs projected to increase 25% by 2025. In addition to direct medical costs, family caregivers in Maryland provide over 360 million hours of unpaid care every year.<sup>1</sup> The Alzheimer's Association has maintained that the numbers show that a public health approach is necessary to lessen the burden and enhance the quality of life for those living with cognitive impairment and their families.<sup>2</sup>

We need to help those suffering from Dementia and Alzheimer's as much as we can. This bill will help those suffering from Dementia, their families, and caregivers by providing and developing a wide spectrum of helpful services, resources, programming, and support. The guaranteed financial allocation in the budget will make sure that that these services and programming are funded.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on SB 228.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://health.maryland.gov/newsroom/Pages/Maryland-Department-of-Health-releases-the-2022-2026-State-Plan-to-Address-Alzheimer%E2%80%99s-Disease-and-Related-Dementias-.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.alz.org/professionals/public-health/state-overview/maryland>