

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
HB 1176 - Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry for Individuals Needing Special Assistance
Position: Favorable

Chair Pena-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullison,

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 House Bill 1176, Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry for Individuals Needing Special Assistance. This legislation establishes the 9-1-1 Registry Program to authorize individual adults, parents or guardians of minor children, or guardians of individuals with special needs to register with a local jurisdiction or local 9-1-1 call center in order to alert first responders of certain behaviors, diagnoses, or traits that individuals with special needs may present during encounters with first responders; and requiring local jurisdictions and local 9-1-1 centers to create 9-1-1 registry programs meeting certain characteristics.

Emergency management officials are, by definition, our frontline workers. Amidst a fire, amidst an emergency, amidst a crisis – knowledge of how to recognize and interact with an individual who has dementia provides tangible benefits to both parties. Individuals with this disease may struggle to understand what is happening. They may not recognize the urgency of a crisis, and that they are being harmed or far worse, that their life is being threatened. First responders who do not know how to manage this situation can make it worse.

This legislation provides a voluntary means of identifying individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementia – to help recognize dementia symptoms, to understand dementia-related behavioral changes, to communicate effectively, and to refer a person for support. It has the potential to save lives and help people.

We urge its passage and a favorable report.