

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
SB 797 - Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse
Position: Favorable with Amendment

Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 797, which establishes the Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse; and requires the Task Force to submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 31, 2024.

This legislation is important. Abuse can occur anywhere, including at home and in care settings. Maryland's over 110,000 residents with dementia are especially vulnerable because the disease may prevent them from reporting the abuse or recognizing it. They also may fall prey to strangers who take advantage of their cognitive impairment.

Abuse comes in many forms:

- Physical: causing physical pain or injury
- Emotional: verbal assaults, threats of abuse, harassment and intimidation
- Neglect: failure to provide necessities, including food, clothing, shelter, medical care or a safe environment
- Confinement: restraining or isolating the person
- Financial: the misuse or withholding of the person's financial resources (money, property) to his or her disadvantage or the advantage of someone else
- Sexual abuse: touching, fondling or any sexual activity when the person is unable to understand, unwilling to consent, threatened or physically forced
- Willful deprivation: willfully denying the person medication, medical care, food, shelter or physical assistance, and thereby exposing the individual with Alzheimer's to the risk of physical, mental or emotional harm
- Self neglect: Due to lack of insight and cognitive changes, a person with Alzheimer's may be unable to safely and adequately provide for day-to-day needs, and may be at risk for harm, falls, wandering and/or malnutrition.ⁱ

This bill is very important as we need more solutions for addressing this issue. **The Alzheimer's Association offers its strong support, and asks for an amendment to include Maryland's Long-Term Care Ombudsman on this task force.** This office is independent from the Department of Aging, has local representatives across the state, and is a vital part of addressing this issue in long-term care facilities [where well over 40 percent of residents have Alzheimer's and other dementia].

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Alzheimer's Association Director of Government Affairs Eric Colchamiro at ercolchamiro@alz.org.

ⁱ <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/abuse>