



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

SB817- Public Safety – Missing Persons With Cognitive Impairment –
Purple Alert Program

Judicial Proceedings Committee

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Letter of Information



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The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

The existing Silver Alert Program (Article- Public Safety § 3-604) defines a missing person as an individual:

- (i) whose whereabouts are unknown;
- (ii) who suffers a **cognitive impairment**, including a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia to the extent that the individual requires assistance from a caregiver; and
- (iii) whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the health and safety of the individual due to age, health, mental or physical disability, environment, or weather conditions, as determined by a law enforcement agency.ⁱ

Page 2, line 17 of SB817, states that the Purple Alert will apply to a person who meets certain conditions, including (IV) WHO DOES NOT MEET THE CRITERIA FOR ACTIVATION OF A SILVER ALERT UNDER § 3-604 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

As the Silver Alert Program definitions include people with cognitive impairments, such as individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and people with Developmental Disabilities with a cognitive impairment, the goal of SB817 may already be able to be achieved through the existing Silver Alert program.

Our intent is to improve outcomes when someone goes missing in Maryland. We should focus on strengthening the established Silver Alert Program, and reviewing regulations to ensure they are accurate and include people of all ages with cognitive impairments. That was the intent

of the Silver Alert legislation that passed in 2009, and our understanding of what is done in practice.

We were deeply concerned this past year when at least two people with IDD were missing and their health and safety was at risk. We are committed to working with everyone to figure out how to improve Maryland's systems so communication is clear and there is always a collaborative response.

For more information, please contact a member of the Maryland DD Coalition.

¹ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=gps§ion=3-604&enactments=false>