

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION®

Bill: SB 920 - Public Health - Interested Parties Advisory Group - Establishment

Committee: Finance

Position: Favorable

Date: March 4, 2025

On behalf of the 127,200 Marylanders living with Alzheimer's disease and their 247,000 caregivers, the Alzheimer's Association supports SB 920 - *Public Health - Interested Parties Advisory Group - Establishment*. SB 920 establishes the Interested Parties Advisory Group (IPAG), a new body under the Maryland Department of Health. The IPAG will provide recommendations to the State to improve Medicaid provider rates for home care services. SB 920 ensures that the IPAG will include representation from direct care workers and consumers, or their authorized representative, who use Medicaid home- and community-based services.

In 2024, **an estimated 36% of individuals using home health services have Alzheimer's or other dementia.**¹ As our population ages and more people develop dementia, the demand for home- and community-based services will increase. For many people living with dementia, there will come a time when they will need more care a family member can provide. During the middle stages of dementia, it can become necessary to provide 24-hour supervision to keep the person with dementia safe. As the disease progresses into the late-stages, around-the-clock care requirements become more intensive.

The largest segment of the workforce that supports people living with dementia is the direct care workforce.² These workers – consisting of personal care aides, home health aides, nursing assistants, and more – assist with activities of daily living, such as bathing and eating, and play a broader role in promoting well-being for those living with dementia. More direct care workers will be needed in the years ahead as Maryland's population ages and the prevalence of dementia increases.

In 2024, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published a federal rule, entitled Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services. The rule recognized the link between access to continuous and quality care, and the wages and working conditions of the direct care workforce. It called for the establishment of an Interested Parties Advisory Group in each State that would advise on Medicaid payments to ensure rates are set high enough to pay home care workers adequate wages and stabilize the workforce.

¹ 2024 Alzheimer's Facts and Figures, <https://www.alz.org/getmedia/76e51bb6-c003-4d84-8019-e0779d8c4e8d/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

² 2024 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures <https://www.alz.org/getmedia/76e51bb6-c003-4d84-8019-e0779d8c4e8d/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

SB 920 will establish Maryland's IPAG and will ensure that the IPAG includes both the voices of workers, as well as consumers. Bringing in the perspective of people living with dementia or their families/caregivers is critical to enable informed policy.

The IPAG will develop recommendations that enable policymakers to make informed decisions to ensure both access and better quality of care. The Alzheimer's Association supports SB 920 and urges a favorable report. Please contact Megan Peters, Director of Government Affairs at mrpeters@alz.org with any questions.