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**Statement of the Maryland Federation of  
National Active and Retired Federal Employees  
Senate Finance Committee Hearing, March 4, 2025  
On SB 748 – Public Health – Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias –  
Information on Prevalence and Treatment**

**(Position – FAV)**

Good Afternoon, Chair Beidle and Vice-Chair Hayes and members of the Finance Committee. I am Robert Doyle, Co-Chair of the State Legislative Committee of the Maryland National and Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), representing approximately 317,000 federal annuitants and employees in Maryland. I am pleased to provide our written statement and to testify today on behalf of our Maryland NARFE members – over 317,000 annuitants and active Federal employees - asking for your support and a favorable report on SB 748 – Public Health – Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias – Prevalence and Treatments. We thank Delegate Kramer for introducing this Bill.

SB 748 will require the Maryland Department of Health, in partnership with the Department of Aging, the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Council, and the Greater Maryland Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, to incorporate information into relevant public health outreach programs administered by the Department on new treatments approved by the Food and Drug Administration for Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias. Additionally, the Department, in collaboration with the State-designated health information exchange (HIE), must establish and maintain a publicly accessible website that includes specified information regarding Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in a downloadable format, which must be updated annually to include any newly available data.

### **Why SB 748 Is Needed**

Alzheimer's Disease is an irreversible, progressive brain disorder that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills and, eventually, the ability to carry out simple tasks. Alzheimer's is the most common disease that causes dementia, an umbrella term that describes a collection of symptoms (cognitive, functional and behavioral) that are caused by specific diseases.

To learn statistics about Alzheimer's disease can be discouraging and frightening. An estimated 6.9 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's dementia today. This number could grow to 13.8 million by 2060, barring the development of medical breakthroughs to prevent or cure AD. In 2020 and 2021, when COVID-19 entered the ranks of the top ten causes of death, Alzheimer's was the seventh-leading cause of death in the United

States. Official counts for more recent years are still being compiled. Alzheimer's remains the fifth-leading cause of death among Americans age 65 and older.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1983, NARFE membership has contributed over \$16 million to the Alzheimer's Association to help its care, support and research programs, and to sponsor 94 research grants examining wide-ranging, disease-related research. During this time, NARFE has distinguished itself as one of the Alzheimer's Association top research funders. Additionally, Kathy Siggins, the current Alzheimer's Coordinator for NARFE Region II, was instrumental in the development of two USPS stamps to fight this disease, a 2008 commemorative stamp, and the 2017 Alzheimer's stamp in the Forever series, part of the sales of which goes to Alzheimer's research.

Regarding our Alzheimer's research efforts, NARFE National President William Shackelford has noted "We're extremely proud of this accomplishment in our continued efforts to find a cure. We remain steadfast in our fundraising commitment in helping change the trajectory of Alzheimer's disease in this country. Our members bear the weight of caring and grieving for someone afflicted with this devastating disease, We support the Alzheimer's Association to not only aid the progressive medical research, but also to offer our members resources to cope."

Dr. Joanne Pike, president and CEO of Alzheimer's Association, said the NARFE's members' generosity and commitment inspired them to raise an additional \$1 million for their mission by the end of 2026. Dr. Pike declared "by raising more than \$16 million to date for the Alzheimer's Association, NARFE has funded critical research toward treatment, prevention and, ultimately, a cure for Alzheimer's and all other dementia while also providing vital funding for our care and support services through their participation in Walk to End Alzheimer's."<sup>2</sup>

The Maryland Department of Health has active dementia prevention and care programs in the state. The Department collaborates with the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Council to track and report activities in the Maryland State Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias and build upon its Healthy Brain Aging awareness campaign to increase early detection and diagnosis and promote healthy brain aging. In 2023, Maryland was awarded a five-year, \$2.5 million grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to expand Alzheimer's and related dementias prevention and care programs in Maryland. The grant period is from September 30, 2023 to September 29, 2028.

"Alzheimer's disease and related dementias represent an urgent and costly public health crisis," said Maryland Department of Health Secretary Laura Herrera Scott. "This grant will help

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<sup>1</sup> 2024 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38689398/>

<sup>2</sup> NARFE Celebrates Exceeding \$16 Million Alzheimer's Fundraising Goal, April 5, 2024, <https://www.narfe.org/blog/2024/04/05/narfe-celebrates-exceeding-16-million-alzheimers-fundraising-goal/>

Maryland provide support and resources within communities most impacted by this devastating disease and lessen the burden on caregivers and families.”<sup>3</sup>

HB 1004 will add to the Department’s existing programs important information on the Alzheimer’s treatments which have FDA approval, including the drugs Lecenemab and Donanemab which received traditional FDA approval in 2023 and 2024, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Both of these are for people living with mild cognitive impairment or mild dementia due to Alzheimer's disease. These drugs can slow disease progression and the decline of memory and thinking, as well as function, in people living with Alzheimer's disease.<sup>5</sup>

Maryland NARFE applauds the current efforts of the Maryland Department of Health and its partner organizations in educating caregivers and individuals about the impacts of Alzheimer’s and the news of progress in research to find a cure. Under the new requirements of SB 748, the MDH will enhance the information it provides to all in Maryland who are fighting the battle against this insidious disease.

We respectfully ask that you give a favorable report to HB 1004.

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<sup>3</sup> Maryland Department of Health receives a \$2.5 million Grant to address Alzheimer’s Disease and related dementias, October 18, 2023, [https://health.maryland.gov/newsroom/Pages/Maryland-Department-of-Health-receives-\\$2.5M-grant-to-address-Alzheimer%E2%80%99s-disease-and-related-dementias.aspx](https://health.maryland.gov/newsroom/Pages/Maryland-Department-of-Health-receives-$2.5M-grant-to-address-Alzheimer%E2%80%99s-disease-and-related-dementias.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> Traditional approval requires that clinical benefit be shown before approval can be granted. Accelerated approval is given to some new drugs for serious and life-threatening illnesses that lack satisfactory treatments. This allows a new drug application to be approved before measures of effectiveness that would usually be required for approval are available. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-consumers-and-patients-drugs/fdas-drug-review-process-continued>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/treatments/navigating-treatment-options>

Thank you.

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