Written Testimony in Support of HB 1004
Submitted by: Paulette Fung
Constituent, District 44B

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 1004, which will provide crucial data on the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in Maryland and expand public health outreach on available treatments.

Maryland has the highest estimated prevalence of Alzheimer's in the nation, yet we do not collect state-specific data on dementia. Without this information, we lack a clear picture of how this disease affects Maryland families. HB 1004 will require an annual report to track dementia prevalence and ensure that Marylanders receive vital education on Alzheimer's treatment options.

Why is data collection so important? Reliable, state-specific data allows researchers, public health officials, healthcare providers, and policymakers to develop targeted interventions, allocate resources effectively, and work toward a future without dementia. Without it, we are failing to meet the needs of the thousands of families affected by this disease.

I speak not only as an advocate but as a caregiver. My mother was diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2022, but I noticed changes in her memory years earlier. In 2015, when I raised my concerns, I was told by doctors that there was no need for worry—that memory loss was just a normal part of aging. Now, each day is a challenge. Some days, my mother knows me as the daughter who cares for her. Other days, she believes I am her mother. The lack of dementia services delayed her diagnosis and prevented early intervention that could have slowed her disease's progression. Even now, I continue to struggle to obtain the necessary services for her care.

Knowledge is power. Access to resources and information is critical for families like mine navigating the challenges of dementia care. HB 1004 is an essential step in ensuring that Marylanders receive the support they need. I urge you to support this legislation and help improve the lives of those affected by Alzheimer's and related dementias.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Paulette Fung
Constituent, District 44B