



**Testimony before the Senate Finance Committee
February 24, 2026**

**Senate Bill 555 - Health - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and
Clinical Toolkit**

SUPPORT

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for Senate Bill 555 Health – Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit.

As social workers serving older adults, we know that dementia rates are very high in Maryland. According to the Alzheimer's and Dementia journal, Maryland has the highest rate (12.9%) of Alzheimer's disease in people sixty-five and older.

As our population ages, we need comprehensive strategies to address this epidemic. Senate Bill 555 would strengthen dementia care and accelerate prevention actions by:

- Establishing crucial infrastructure by creating a Dementia Services and Brain Health program within the Maryland Department of Health. This body would coordinate statewide risk reduction and other prevention activities;
- Providing healthcare professionals with a clinical toolkit for diagnosis and care of dementia patients; and
- Enhancing strategic planning by expanding the role of the Virginia I Jones Alzheimer's and Related Dementia Council to include advising the state on care strategies and assessing the readiness of healthcare professionals to provide evidence-based care.

The impact of this legislation will be great. It will help Marylanders reduce their risk of dementia, enable earlier diagnosis, and promote more effective treatment. All of these public health measures should reduce the frequency of hospitalizations and delay or prevent long-term care placements for many older adults.

For these reasons, we ask that you give a favorable report to Senate Bill 555.

Respectfully,

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