



**Statement of the Maryland Federation of
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Senate Finance Committee Hearing, February 24, 2026
On SB 555 – Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical
Toolkit**

(Position – FAV)

To: Chair Pamela Beidle
Vice-Chair Antonio Hayes

From: Robert Doyle, Chair
State Legislative Committee
MD Federation NARFE

I am pleased to submit today this statement on behalf of the State Legislative Committee of the Maryland National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), representing approximately 317,000 federal annuitants and employees in Maryland. For the continuing protection and benefit of our members and all Maryland seniors, we support and ask you for your support and a favorable report on SB 555 - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit. We thank Senator Hayes for introducing this Bill.

This bill establishes the Dementia Services and Brain Health Program (BHP) in the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to lead the State's public health efforts relating to brain health and dementia. The BHP will have these tasks: 1) support and promote the delivery of dementia-capable care across health care settings through various methods, including establishing and maintaining a clinical toolkit for dementia care; (2) coordinating with academic institutions, health occupations boards, and continuing education providers to promote participation in dementia-specific education, training, and certification for health care professionals; and (3) collaborating with State-led care transformation initiatives to identify opportunities to incorporate dementia-capable care practices into health care models.

Regarding the Clinical Toolkit, MDH, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA), the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Council and other organizations with expertise in Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, must establish and maintain a clinical toolkit for dementia care for health care providers by January 1, 2027. MDH must review and update the information in the toolkit by January 1, 2028 and annually thereafter.

The Clinical Toolkit will provide a standard "instruction manual" for health care providers in caring for patients who are at risk for or who may have dementia. The Toolkit will include much useful information, including but not limited to 1) risk factors for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, 2) risk reduction strategies, including information on lifestyle interventions to reduce dementia risk; and 3) validated assessment tools for the detection and

diagnosis of cognitive impairment. The Toolkit will be especially helpful to health care providers who may not be up to speed on dementia knowledge if they don't specialize in this area

NARFE has long been working to eradicate Alzheimer's. 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. I have included a short appendix to our statement discussing NARFE's interest and work in this area.

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. We believe SB 555 is another important step in helping Maryland health professionals provide the best dementia care to our seniors and all who may experience cognitive illness.

We respectfully ask that you give a favorable report to SB 555.

Thank you.

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Appendix -- Why SB 555 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.¹

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."²

NARFE recognizes and supports the good work done by the Maryland Department of Health which has active dementia prevention and care programs in the state. The Department

¹ 2025 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38689398/>

² 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/>

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

In the 2025 Maryland General Assembly session, NARFE was proud to support HB 1004 which required the MDH 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 bill required MDH in collaboration with the State-designated health information exchange (HIE), to 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. This Bill added 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.⁴ 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.⁵ HB 1004 was passed and enacted into law in Maryland in 2025.

³ 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)

⁴ 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>

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