

February 24, 2026

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and distinguished members of the Finance Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 60,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

SB 555 introduces crucial changes for the field of brain health within the state of Maryland, particularly in the field of Alzheimer's and dementia. The primary purpose of this bill is to make much needed changes to the duties performed by the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Council and to establish the Dementia Services and Brain Health Program in the MDH. The program would also assess and monitor the progress and efficiency of state agencies that aid those suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia. Under this bill, State agencies would also be able to apply for grants in order to fund Alzheimer's and dementia care and research. In addition to this, SB 555 would also provide a tool kit for healthcare providers who care for patients suffering from both Alzheimer's and dementia. This toolkit would include important standardized resources and information such as assessment tools, early detection strategies, and risk factors.

NAMI Maryland believes that all brain and mental illnesses deserve the highest quality care possible. Alzheimer's and dementia are heartbreaking diseases that are not only devastating for the victims, but also devastating for the families. Patients with Alzheimer's and dementia are often in the care of their family members and having more support and better medical care would ease physical and mental distress on both patients and their families. Caring for a loved one with any sort of mental illness, especially a degenerative brain disease such as Alzheimer's is challenging and can also have serious detrimental effects on the mental health of family members. Having to mourn the loss of someone who is still with you physically but not mentally is one of the worst pains a person can face and the care this bill would provide means for the State to be able to further help ease that pain and make the journey of Alzheimer's and dementia more manageable for families and beneficial for patients. With all of this in mind, we at NAMI Maryland strongly urge for a favorable report on SB 555.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Stephanie Slowly-Little  
Executive Director  
National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland

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