

## Written Testimony in Support of SB 555

Submitted by:

**George Hennawi, MD**

**Physician Executive Director of Geriatrics and Senior Services for MedStar Health**

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of *SB 555 - Health - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit* which establishes the Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and requires the development of a statewide clinical dementia care toolkit.

My name is Dr. George Hennawi, and I serve as the Physician Executive Director of Geriatrics and Senior Services for MedStar Health. **For more than two decades, my career has been dedicated to improving the care of older adults.** In 2012, I founded the Center for Successful Aging at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital. The Center is a place where patients receive comprehensive care and all age-related issues can be addressed. My goal in caring for patients is to improve their quality of life and empower them to become an integral part of the direction and decision-making regarding their care.

Through this work, **I have seen firsthand the increasing prevalence and complexity of dementia care across Maryland.** I am alarmed by the national estimates ranking both Maryland and Baltimore City as having the highest prevalence of Alzheimer's in the nation. I am caring for patients in some of the most impacted communities in the nation, and far too often, I see them for the first time in mid or late-stage dementia, past a point when earlier diagnosis would have given them and their families more options and support.

### **My patients often struggle with:**

- **Delayed detection or missed diagnoses**, which often results in later-stage presentation. By developing a statewide clinical dementia care toolkit with evidence-based resources, SB 555 will give providers clearer guidance and resources that support earlier detection and timely follow-up, especially in primary care, where most concerns first arise.
- **Fragmented care between primary care, specialists, hospitals, and community supports.** The statewide Dementia Services and Brain Health Program will expand public and provider awareness of dementia and help build out guidance and connections that clinicians need. These efforts will strengthen linkages across the care continuum and increase awareness of available dementia resources, helping to improve coordination for patients and families.

**SB 555 offers Maryland a clear path to more consistent clinical practices, earlier diagnoses, and better-supported families.** By creating a standardized toolkit and establishing a statewide Program, this bill will give health care providers the guidance and infrastructure needed to deliver timely, coordinated, and person-centered dementia care.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 555.

**Respectfully,**

**George Hennawi, MD**

**Physician Executive Director of Geriatrics and Senior Services for MedStar Health**