



PO Box 34  
Sykesville, MD 21784

**TO:** Senate Finance Committee  
**FROM:** LeadingAge Maryland  
**SUBJECT:** Senate Bill 555, Health - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit  
**DATE:** February 24, 2026  
**POSITION:** Favorable

LeadingAge Maryland supports Senate Bill 555, Health - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit.

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 150 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Members of LeadingAge Maryland provide health care, housing, and services to more than 20,000 older persons each year.

In Maryland, Alzheimer's disease is the seventh leading cause of death among older residents. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias represent an urgent, high burden, and high-cost public health crisis. An estimated 110,000 Maryland residents over age 65 are living with dementia, a number that is expected to increase 18% to 130,000 by 2025. Care for individuals with dementia accounts for more than \$1.2 billion in annual Medicaid spending, with costs projected to increase 25% by 2025. In addition to direct medical costs, family caregivers in Maryland provide over 360 million hours of unpaid care every year.<sup>1</sup>

Senate Bill 555 aims to enhance the state's response to dementia and promote brain health through the establishment of the Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit. As an organization dedicated to advancing the interests of older adults and the organizations that serve them, we believe this legislation is crucial in addressing the growing need for dementia care and support in our state.

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<sup>1</sup> 2022-2026 State Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias

Why it Matters: Dementia is a pressing public health concern that affects thousands of Marylanders and their families. As our population ages, the prevalence of dementia will only continue to rise, placing increased demands on our healthcare system and social services. By investing in a comprehensive approach to dementia care and prevention, we can improve the lives of individuals living with dementia, support their caregivers, and reduce the economic burden on our state.

Immediate Impact: The Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit will have a direct and immediate impact on healthcare providers, equipping them with the practical tools and resources needed to deliver timely, person-centered care. This will lead to improved early detection and access to treatment, enabling individuals to receive the care they need when it matters most. Furthermore, healthcare providers will be empowered to counsel patients on reducing dementia risk, promoting upstream prevention strategies that can make a meaningful difference in the lives of Marylanders.

Upstream Prevention: By establishing a statewide program focused on brain health and dementia prevention, Maryland will be taking a proactive approach to addressing this critical public health issue. The program will lead the state's long-term prevention strategies, providing a framework for reducing dementia risk and promoting healthy aging. This will not only improve the health and well-being of our citizens but also contribute to a more sustainable and cost-effective approach to healthcare.

Cost Savings: The strategies outlined in Senate Bill 555 have the potential to yield significant cost savings for our state. By promoting risk reduction and early diagnosis, we can enable care planning, reduce hospitalizations, and delay or prevent unnecessary long-term care placements. This, in turn, will reduce future Medicaid and healthcare spending, ensuring that our resources are allocated in a way that maximizes value and supports the well-being of our citizens.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 555.