

February 10, 2026

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and distinguished members of the Health 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.

HB202 would establish the Social Isolation and Loneliness Pilot Grant Program in the MDH as well as provide grants to fund this program. The program would assess populations within the state of Maryland at particular risk for the detrimental effects of social isolation and loneliness and provide programs to reduce these symptoms as well as provide information for future policy regarding these topics. This bill calls for a modest investment of \$100,000 in FY28.

NAMI Maryland believes that social isolation and loneliness are serious symptoms of larger mental health problems such as anxiety and depression that are facing our population. These issues affect people of all ages and are particularly prominent in the elderly. As people age, they often experience loss that can leave them feeling isolated and alone. In addition, elderly people often aren't able to get the help that they need due to lack of awareness and social stigmas. By creating the Social Isolation and Loneliness Pilot Grant Program, resources could be provided to citizens who are suffering and believe they have nowhere to turn.

NAMI Maryland also believes that it is crucial to consider the connection between social isolation and loneliness and anxiety disorders.

Nearly 20% of the United States' population has a diagnosed anxiety disorder with many more suffering undiagnosed. People suffering from anxiety are commonly pushed into social isolation and loneliness due to the difficulties their condition forces them to face, especially without treatment and resources. Many of these individuals face stigmas and fear judgement when it comes to mental health and its treatment and it is imperative that we break these stigmas to promote healthy minds to our population.

Passing HB202 would be a crucial step towards furthering mental health treatment and breaking down barriers for particularly vulnerable populations. Establishing the Social Isolation and Loneliness Pilot Grant Program would provide proper research, funding, and support for these individuals.

For these reasons, we at urge a favorable report.

Stephanie Slowly-Little
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