

April 2, 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.

SB809 would mandate a feasibility study from the Office of the Comptroller with assistance from the Department of Human Services on the feasibility of establishing and operating the Supporting Our Caregiver Infrastructure Program.

This program would provide monthly payments to individuals who serve as full time caregivers to qualified family members. The bill would provide important financial support to these individuals who are dedicating their time to their family members and alleviate any financial burden they may feel due to this time being redirected from their professional lives. We at NAMI Maryland believe care from family members to be one of the most crucial forms of care. When someone has a mental health condition, support from family can make a big difference. Many individuals must put their jobs and other obligations aside in order to become full time caregivers for their family members and it is unjust to cause financial distress to these individuals over having to choose between financial security and taking care of their loved one who is suffering.

These caregivers are selfless and fighting through their own battle of watching a family member suffer. This study this bill proposes would analyze how a program like this could possibly look and tailor it to our State needs as well as the needs of those who are dedicating their time to care for a loved one. NAMI Maryland offers many free programs that offer insight on how to properly care for caregiver, and this bill is in line with our beliefs—that caregivers are essential and as a State, we ought to recognize them as such.

If the findings of this study are positive, which we hope they will be, Maryland can hopefully look forward to future establishment of this program. For these reasons we at NAMI Maryland respectfully urge for a favorable report on SB809.

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