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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony for Senator Hayes in Support of Senate Bill 555 - *Health - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit***

*Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair and members of the Health Committee,*

For the record, I am Senator Antonio Hayes, and I am pleased to present **Senate Bill 555**. This legislation is a critical step forward in strengthening Maryland's public health infrastructure to support individuals living with dementia, their families, and the healthcare providers who care for them.

Currently, Maryland statute establishes a "Director" of Dementia Services. SB 555 expands and formalizes this role by establishing the **Dementia Services and Brain Health Program** within the Maryland Department of Health.

- The Program will serve as the lead for the State's public health efforts regarding brain health and dementia.
- It shifts the administrative responsibilities—such as staffing the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Council and overseeing the State Plan—from a single individual to the Program itself, ensuring better continuity and institutional support.

**Empowering Providers: The Clinical Toolkit** One of the most significant components of this bill is the requirement to develop a **Clinical Toolkit for Dementia Care** by January 1, 2027.

- **The Need:** Healthcare providers often lack a centralized, up-to-date resource for best practices in dementia care.
- **The Solution:** This toolkit will be developed in partnership with the Department of Aging and the Council to support providers in delivering evidence-based, person-centered care.
- **Content:** The toolkit will include vital information on risk factors, lifestyle interventions for risk reduction, validated assessment tools for early diagnosis, and racial disparities in detection and access to care .
- **Practical Tools:** Crucially, it will also provide practical administrative support, such as information on reimbursement tools (billing codes) and referral pathways to community-based services.

Finally, SB 555 updates the duties of the Virginia I. Jones Council. The bill directs the Council to examine the readiness and capacity of our healthcare workforce to deliver care to those at risk for dementia and to identify methods to assist providers in delivering that care efficiently.

As our population ages, the prevalence of Alzheimer's and related dementias will continue to rise. SB 555 ensures Maryland has a dedicated Program and concrete tools to meet this challenge head-on.

This Act will take effect on October 1, 2026. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 555.

**Position: Favorable**