



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

*Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters*

*Baltimore Jewish
Council*

*Catholic Charities of
Baltimore*

*Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council*

Church of the Brethren

*Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County*

*Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland*

*Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic
Conference*

*Mental Health
Association of Maryland*

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

*National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter*

Presbytery of Baltimore

*The Coordinating
Center*

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The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing, health, and quality of care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

MSCAN supports SB 555. This bill will strengthen Maryland's ability to respond to one of the most significant challenges facing older adults: dementia. Maryland's aging population is growing rapidly, and with it, the number of Marylanders living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. New state data show that **more than 148,000 Marylanders aged 65+ are living with dementia**—the highest estimated prevalence rates in the nation.

SB 555 makes critical improvements to Maryland's capacity to support older adults, caregivers, and the organizations that serve them. The bill strengthens two essential pillars: health care delivery and public health leadership. First the bill will establish a toolkit to equip health care providers with practical, up-to-date guidance on early detection, diagnosis, care planning, and risk reduction. As new treatments and diagnostic tools emerge, consistent guidance is essential to ensure quality dementia care across the state. Secondly, by expanding the role of the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's and Related Dementias Council to assess health care provider readiness, Maryland can better identify gaps and inform the State and policymakers on necessary strategies to help further strengthen dementia care.

The bill will also establish a Dementia Services and Brain Health Program within the Maryland Department of Health. Maryland currently relies on a single staff position to coordinate the Maryland's dementia response. Creating a formal Program recognizes the scope and urgency of the issue and provides stability, continuity, and the infrastructure needed to support brain health promotion, public and provider education, and dementia capable care across settings.

The impact of SB 555 will be significant:

- **Higher quality and more consistent care** through better clinical tools and clearer pathways for diagnosis, management, and referral.
- **Improved health outcomes** through stronger, evidence-based guidance on dementia risk reduction and early detection.
- **Reduced long-term costs** by avoiding preventable hospitalizations and delaying or reducing the need for long-term care placements.
- **A stronger statewide infrastructure** capable of meeting the needs of Marylanders living with dementia and the caregivers and providers who support them.

SB 555 represents a practical, forward-looking investment in Maryland's aging population. By improving coordination, strengthening provider readiness, and supporting brain health across the lifespan, this bill will benefit families today and future generations.

For these reasons, MSCAN respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 555.