



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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February 12, 2026

Chair Heather Bagnall
Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Bagnall and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 446 - Health - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit. The bill changes the obligation of the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Council to create a new Dementia Services and Brain Health Program within the Maryland Department of Health to lead the state's efforts on brain health and dementia. The Director of Dementia Services and Brain Health will run the program, which will implement the State dementia plan, support better care, and provide staff support to the Council. Also, it requires that the Maryland Department of Health, Department of Aging, and other partners create a clinical toolkit to help health care providers treat and care for individuals with dementia. House Bill 446 is essential as this will become a statewide public health priority that focuses on assigning responsibilities, better coordination, and providing a toolkit that will improve early detection, treatment, and care in underserved communities. **This bill is a 2026 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland believes that HB 446 will help address public health challenges and improve healthcare providers' ability to meet the needs of individuals with dementia. According to a 2023 study, Maryland is estimated to have 12.9% of individuals age 65 and older living with Alzheimer's disease. In particular, older black Americans are about twice as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias as older whites. House Bill 446 will equip healthcare providers to provide early detection, diagnosis, and care planning, which is beneficial as Maryland has one of the highest rates of Alzheimer's disease.

Additionally, House Bill 446 provides knowledge and resources as dementia is rapidly increasing and, without intervention, results in delayed diagnoses, missed opportunities for treatment, and poorer outcomes for Maryland families. The toolkit will ensure its timely, evidence-based resources across the care continuum. HB 446 also establishes a Dementia Services and Brain Health program within the Maryland Department of Health that will lead to risk reduction efforts and coordinate statewide strategies that will create immediate impact within individual lives, promote upstream prevention for patients by reducing dementia risk, and result in cost savings by reducing hospitalization and delays in care. The passage of this bill will grow and help minority

communities that face dementia, provide resources for health care providers to be equipped, and reduce the gap in dementia treatment.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports House Bill 446.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland