

February 5, 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.

We fully support HB162 and urge a favorable report.

Individuals with dementia may notice changes in their emotions and behavior like depressed mood, anxiety, increased irritation, lack of emotional expression (apathy), and psychosis. For the aging population, experiencing cognitive decline from dementia can be made even more difficult by these symptoms. Understanding the illness and the resources available, including a communicative healthcare team and a strong system of support can help these vulnerable individuals.

Resources, training, grants, and other support to create dementia friendly communities will help our State become stronger and more inclusive. Many individuals with mental illness and their families may not seek help, or they may feel like outsiders in their communities, due to the stigma associated with a diagnosis. Stigma causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control. It prevents people from seeking the help they need. As a State, we should always encourage actions to battle stigma, promote acceptance, empathy, foster socially inclusive environments, and facilitate specialized training to increase awareness of mental illness. We applaud the sponsor for their work and advocacy for Marylanders with dementia and their families.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

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