



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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April 2, 2026

Dear Delegate Bagnall and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for Senate Bill 555 - Health - Dementia Services and Brain Health Program and Clinical Toolkit. This vital legislation strengthens Maryland's public health infrastructure by establishing a permanent Dementia Services and Brain Health Program within the Maryland Department of Health and enhancing the state's ongoing efforts to address Alzheimer's disease, related dementias, and other brain health needs. **This bill is on the 2026 Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland priority agenda.**

Senate Bill 555 builds on the important work of the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Council by clarifying its duties and empowering a dedicated state program with the leadership and resources needed to coordinate statewide dementia initiatives. The bill transitions certain responsibilities from the Director to the Program itself, establishing clearer accountability and expanded capacity for long-term strategic planning.

Importantly, SB 555 requires the new Program to oversee the implementation of Maryland's State Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias, support and promote the delivery of dementia-capable care, and work collaboratively with both public and private partners to improve outcomes for individuals with cognitive impairment and their caregivers.

The bill also mandates the development of a clinical toolkit for dementia care, an up-to-date resource that will help healthcare providers across the state deliver care rooted in best practices, promote brain health, and reduce cognitive decline. This toolkit will support operational efforts, offer guidance for managing risk factors, and promote continuing education for healthcare professionals.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias disproportionately impact Black Marylanders and other communities of color due to disparities in access to care, late diagnosis, and limited culturally competent health resources. By making dementia services more coordinated, visible, and evidence-based, SB 555 helps reduce these disparities and supports families who are navigating complex care needs.

Ultimately, **Senate Bill 555** enhances Maryland's capacity to respond to one of the most pressing public health challenges of our time by investing in brain health, supporting caregivers, and equipping providers with the tools they need to improve quality of life for affected individuals and their families. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland urges favorable consideration of Senate Bill 555.

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