



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: February 2, 2026

Bill Number: HB 162

Bill Title: Department of Aging - Maryland Access Point Dementia-Friendly Communities

Committee: House Health Committee

MDOA Position: Letter of Concern

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of concern on behalf of the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) for House Bill (HB) 162 - Department of Aging - Maryland Access Point Dementia-Friendly Communities.

MDOA strongly appreciates the intent of this legislation to improve community awareness, education and overall readiness to support people living with Alzheimer's and related dementias. Under Human Services Article §10-1301-1303, established by HB 614 and SB 228 of 2023 MDOA currently operates a long-term care and dementia navigation program. This is a still-new statewide program authorized by the legislature, and the Department just filed its first annual report in October 2025, detailing its work to date.¹ As the statute prescribes, this program's work focuses heavily on cognitive screenings, supporting people experiencing dementia and their caregivers. MDOA and area agency on aging (AAA) staff at the local level participate in and host their own outreach events and activities to the public that drive individuals to the program's resources and other available resources. Under Human Services Article §10-1303, this program has a mandatory appropriation of \$2.4 million per year. This program, as well as the Department's Maryland Access Point Program established under Human Services Article §10-1002-1004, are important programs focused on supporting people with dementia and their caregivers while providing accurate, useful information to the general public. The Maryland Access Point program's core longtime functions are options counseling and providing useful information and referrals to constituents who are older and/or are caring for an older person.

¹ MDOA, Annual Report of the Long-Term Care and Dementia Navigation Program, October 1, 2025, *available at*: [https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDoA/HU10-1301\(c\)_2025.pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDoA/HU10-1301(c)_2025.pdf)



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The community-facing functions of providing public awareness and educational materials to communities about dementia, including community-based ways to reduce the stigma of dementia, foster inclusive environments and make physical environments easier to navigate and safe are commendable. However, they are not positioned for success under management by MDOA and may be best addressed at the local level in the future.

MDOA's Maryland Access Point Program as Long-Term Care and Dementia Navigation programs are at full operational capacity with their existing, prescribed duties. Neither program, nor any others at MDOA, have any additional staff capacity or funding available to responsibly take on any of the new work responsibilities this legislation envisions.

In light of current projected general fund deficits in fiscal 2027 and beyond, MDOA urges caution in passing legislation that significantly increases expenditures without commensurate decreases in other areas. In light of the current fiscal crisis, the state government must be disciplined and strategic in its funding decisions to protect essential services. Any legislation that increases spending should include specific, identified, and sustainable funding offsets.

Given the forecasted out-year deficits as well as significant uncertainty regarding the federal budget and policy changes, it would be challenging for the State to manage this increase in spending. This challenge is compounded by major, unforeseen changes in federal policy and other ongoing budgetary pressures.

If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at andrea.nunez@maryland.gov or (443) 414-8183.