



One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475
1-866-542-8163 | Fax: 410-837-0269
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmd
facebook.com/aarpmd

**SB 745 – Police Training – Autism and Dementia
(LEAD Act of 2026)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 24, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 745, the LEAD Act of 2026. We thank Senator McKay for introducing this important legislation.

My name is Dorinda Adams. I am a member of the AARP Maryland Executive Council and a volunteer on the advocacy team. AARP Maryland has worked in close coordination with Laila's Gift and others to help in the development of LEAD Act of 2026.

AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, with approximately 850,000 members. We represent the interests of Maryland's over 50 population and bring the lived experiences, concerns, and priorities of our members to the discussion table, ensuring that policy decisions reflect the needs of older adults.

Why AARP Maryland Supports SB 745

SB 745 requires the Maryland Police and Training Standards Commission to require entrance-level and in-service police training to include training regarding individuals with autism and dementia who are prone to wander, also called elopement. This issue is near and dear to my heart because my father lived with dementia was prone to wander. This led to a lot of concern for his safety.

Current training requirements address individuals with physical, intellectual, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities. Expanding the training to address elopement, wandering, or missing individuals living with autism or dementia is important, as the data demonstrates that these populations are at risk for wandering or eloping.

National data indicates that 60 percent of individuals living with Alzheimer's dementia or other forms of dementia will elope at least once during the course the disease. The Maryland Department of Health's Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Prevalence Data Report from November 2025 identified that 148,470 (15%) individuals aged 65 and older living in Maryland have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. If we consider these two pieces of information, it is evident that Maryland has an estimated 89,000 individuals living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia who are likely to wander or elope at least once.

That figure, 89,000, is just the first part of the equation, as we know each one of these individuals has family, friends, and other members of their communities who are impacted by the risks of elopement. We also know that first responders are impacted as well, as they want the best outcomes for a vulnerable individual but may not be trained on how best to address the complexities of supporting an individual living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia.

SB 745 is a step in providing first responders with specific training to address elopement, across the lifespan, especially for those living with autism and dementia as well as individuals with cognitive impairment.

Conclusion

We believe that by passing SB 745, Maryland will lead the country in ensuring that first responders are trained to support a favorable, often life-saving outcome of addressing elopement in individuals at risk of wandering.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 745.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director, at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.