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Health and Government
Operations Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY FOR HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE**

CHAIR SHANE PENDERGRASS
VICE CHAIR JOSELINE PENA-MELNYK

**HOUSE BILL 141: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – RESIDENTIAL
SERVICE AGENCIES- TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

January 19th, 2021

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Good Afternoon Chairman Pendergrass and Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk. Today, I ask for your support of HB 141, Maryland Department of Health - Residential Service Agencies - Training Requirements, which would mandate that residential service agencies in Maryland provide their direct care and administrative staff with three hours of initial training related to dementia care, and have two hours of continuing education for staff every year. As someone with a parent who suffers from dementia this bill is personal to me, but I am far from alone in that struggle. I am sure many of you also have loved ones who are suffering. I have worked on this bill for quite some time now, and am happy to say that those who formerly opposed the bill are now sitting next to me in support of it. Our final round of negotiations are reflected in the amendment which you should have in front of you. I hope that you see this bill for the thoughtful and effective piece of legislation that it is, and vote in favor accordingly.

This legislation came to me three years ago from a constituent and RSA owner, Amy Keller, who you will hear from today. She was growing increasingly concerned with the state of the industry. With over 11 years of experience, she had seen too often the care for seniors with dementia and related diseases fall short of what they deserved. It was Amy—a provider—who said to me that we need to set a standard for companies in the RSA industry. And it was Amy—a provider—who said that caregivers need more tools to care for the aging population, amidst an industry that pays them just above minimum wage.

When we met, she provided the biggest binder of information than I've received from any lobbyist or advocate since joining the General Assembly. In that binder were color coded COMAR references and PowerPoints and studies; but most importantly she provided her

Dementia training curriculum. It was and still is one of the most thorough trainings you will see any provider give to their employees in any field.

Since then we have worked diligently with The Alzheimer's Association of Maryland and the Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association (MNCHA) to create a bill that would protect caregivers and patients, as well as be amenable to the RSA industry. We are coming to you today, side by side, having created a piece of legislation that does just that. Both sides have made compromises along the way, but we are all immensely of the work we have done.

This legislation will equip caregivers—37 percent of whom receive public assistance, over 15 percent of whom lack health insurance, and have a median annual income of just over \$22,000 in Maryland—with essential training, while they are in the workforce, to care for our most vulnerable seniors. They deserve it.

One in three seniors suffer from Alzheimer's disease or related dementia right now. My mom, at the too-young age of 61, began showing signs of this disease. Assisted living and nursing homes in our state have staff who are required to be trained in dementia care. For the over 1,200 RSAs in Maryland, who we invite into our homes—to care for our greatest generation—they are only visited by the State if there is a complaint, and they have staff with no mandated training in dementia care. I urge you to fill this critical gap.

Thank you again for your time, I request a favorable report on HB 141 with the coinciding amendment. I w