

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
HB 463 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act
Position: Favorable

Chair Pendergrass and Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk,

My name is Eric Colchamiro, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Alzheimer's Association in Maryland. Our organization writes in strong support of HB 463.

We applaud this legislation and its focus on addressing health care disparities. Funds collected—and dispersed to communities in need—will be instrumental for a better Maryland, where your health status is not determined by your zip code. For Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, which is associated with comorbidities such as hypertension and obesity, this can make a difference.

Alzheimer's is a disease where there are stark differences by community and by race. Black Marylanders are twice as likely to be diagnosed with dementia, and Latinos are 1.5 times more likely to be diagnosed than White Marylanders.

Our organization directly engages organizations such as African American churches—across Maryland-- about the Association's resources, including our 24-7 helpline for families. We have, for the past 16 years, held the Pythias and Virginia I. Jones African American Community Forum on Memory Loss, which educates over 400 participants each year. And in 2020, we held—in addition to numerous ongoing programs—our first ever Latino Summit, which provided valuable information regarding how Alzheimer's affects the Latino community, and highlighted the many Spanish language programs and resources. But there needs to be more resources and more targeted outreach to Maryland communities in need.

Thank you for your time, and we urge a favorable report on this legislation