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MAYOR

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HB 731

February 17, 2022

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 731 – Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigators

POSITION: Support

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 731.

HB 731 builds the capacity of Maryland Department of Aging and local Area Agencies on Aging to respond to the growing number of Marylanders with Alzheimer's Disease and related disorders (ADRD). The bill creates a dementia care navigation program within the Department and the Area Agencies. The navigators will assist and guide caregivers of persons with dementia, build community awareness of dementia, improve the ability of service providers, including emergency response agencies to serve persons with dementia, and provide technical assistance to Area Agency on Aging staff as they provide services to the growing number of Marylanders with ADRD and their family caregivers.

The Alzheimer's Association estimates that 110,000 Marylanders 65 and over had Alzheimer's Disease in 2020, and that this number will grow to 130,000 by 2025. Data indicates 1 in 12 Maryland residents 45 years and older is experiencing Subjective Cognitive Decline (SCD), defined as self-reported memory problems that have been getting worse over the past year.

The City of Baltimore is particularly concerned with the disproportionate burden of dementia in minority communities. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that "older African Americans are about two times more likely than older whites to have Alzheimer's or other dementias," and that "older Hispanics are about one and one-half times more likely than older whites to have Alzheimer's or other dementias." Because two-thirds of Baltimore's older adults are African-American, we recognize that dementia disproportionately affects the people our City Health Department serves.

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HB 731 aligns with the work Baltimore City is currently doing to ensure that individuals with dementia receive high quality care, as the City Health Department works to train staff on how to recognize signs of dementia and support patients and caregivers.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 731.