

Testimony in Support of SB 27 "Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia - Council and Coordination of Services (Dementia Services Act of 2022)."

Maryland Senate Finance Committee

February 3, 2022

**FAVORABLE**

TO: Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Claudia Thorne, Ph.D., LCSW, LISW

Currently, I serve as a member of the State of Maryland's Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Council. I take my position in support of this bill because I have been a caregiver for a parent with Alzheimer's Disease. Even with my professional knowledge and experience, navigating the service delivery landscape is very complicated, and a coordinated response is necessary.

Alzheimer's Disease is a public health crisis. There are 110,000 people aged 65 and older living with Alzheimer's in Maryland, 10.1% of people aged 45 and older have subjective cognitive decline. There are 238,000 family caregivers bearing the burden of the disease in Maryland. The dollar costs are astronomical, with a \$6.6 billion value of unpaid care and \$1.2 billion in costs to the state Medicaid program. These statistics are expected to increase with population aging. Given this, a public health response is necessary to improve the quality of life for persons living with Alzheimer's and their families and prepare the service delivery system to provide services with excellence.

Alzheimer's not only impacts the person diagnosed with the disease, but it also has a significant impact on their families. The journey through Alzheimer's begins with the diagnosis, continues through intensive formal and informal service delivery, and ends with death and bereavement. This journey is long and complicated. A range of services are necessary to manage the disease, including medical care, social services, formal and informal supports, and resources to cope with the emotional adjustments. Persons living with the disease and their families need to know how to access and navigate the range of services and resources available. Persons working in dementia care require education and information to enhance dementia capability and deliver evidence-based interventions.

I fully support SB 27 that builds on the current 2012 plan and contains a variety of new recommendations for policy and actions suggested to achieve five major goals:

Goal 1: Expand efforts to support public awareness, prevention, and early detection of ADRD;

Goal 2: Enhance quality, access, and coordination of ADRD care;

Goal 3: Enhance and expand supports for family caregivers;

Goal 4: Advance ADRD research and encourage evidence-based practices; and

Goal 5: Enhance data capabilities related to dementia and dementia impact and effects of interventions.

This plan serves as a roadmap for addressing Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) in Maryland—one that takes a hopeful, data-guided, public health approach to enhance areas critical to building a solid public health approach to ADRD that encompasses better infrastructure, public awareness and empowerment, better and more coordinated care, a more dementia-capable workforce, comprehensive caregiver support, and care innovations through research.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of this bill. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 27.

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