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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
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**February 17, 2022**

**Support of HB 731 – Department of Aging - Dementia Care Coordinator and Dementia Care Navigation Programs**

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 241  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Esteemed Members of Health and Government Operations Committee:

House Bill 731 establishes a Dementia Care Navigator program, including creating a position of Dementia Care Coordinator in the State Department of Aging and Dementia Care Navigators within each of the state's 20 Area Agencies on Aging.

More than 130,000 Marylanders are currently living with Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease. These individuals are supported by 238,000 caregivers – family, friends, and loved ones – who provided more than 364,000 hours of unpaid care. These caregivers provide an incredibly valuable source of support to those suffering, with one third of caregivers providing over 20 hours per week in care, and a quarter providing over 40 hours of care per week. Based on these figures, the total value of this unpaid care is over \$6.56 Billion Dollars each year.

These caregivers need our support. More than two out of three caregivers have a chronic health condition of their own they are managing, including one in four who are managing depression. Half of the current caregivers have been providing care for more than two years, and one in five dementia caregivers are members of the "sandwich generation", providing care for someone with dementia and a child or grandchild.

The Dementia Care Navigator program would be responsible for supporting family caregivers in their jurisdictions, helping develop plans for their loved ones' care, connecting them with support groups and other resources, and assisting in efforts to make their communities more inclusive to people with dementia. The navigators would also help those who may not have a diagnosis yet connect with providers who can conduct cognitive screenings and diagnose the disease earlier. While there is still no cure, early detection and diagnosis can provide additional options for treatment and disease management.


This legislation also sets aside funds for a position within the state Department of Aging to coordinate and oversee the work of the caregiving specialists. Providing a state wide coordinator is essential to ensuring that our local navigators are encouraged to work collaboratively with their colleagues state-wide, connecting those suffering with the disease with locally available resources as well as those that might exist outside of their local area but are available within the state and region.

Currently, Maryland has no funding specifically dedicated to supporting our caregiving community. This legislation includes \$1.6 million in funding to support the Care Navigator Program. The program proposed in this legislation is modeled after a Wisconsin program which has successfully provided support to caregivers since it's created in 2015. The Wisconsin Demential Care Specialist Program, currently receives \$7.12 million in funding per year. Other states providing funding for caregivers include:

- New York: Over \$20 million to provide direct services to support people with dementia and dementia family caregivers;
- North Dakota: \$1.3 million to the state's Dementia Care Services Program which supports dementia-friendly caregivers; and
- Washington: \$1.5 million for its Dementia Resource Catalyst programs to deliver and connect individuals with dementia-specific community services.

If we don't take care of the caretakers by giving them greater support and access to services, they're not going to be able to take care of their loved ones in a home setting that is better for everyone involved. For these reasons, I urge you to support HB 731, and I request a favorable report.

Thank you,



Delegate Karen Lewis Young