



**Position of the Alzheimer's Association
Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters**

On

**SB 449 - Labor and Employment - Direct Care Workforce Innovation
Program**

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and Vice Chair Feldman,

My name is Eric Colchamiro, and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Alzheimer's Association. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 449, legislation which establishes the Direct Care Workforce Innovation Program in the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning within the Maryland Department of Labor.

There are currently over 110,000 Marylanders who suffer from Alzheimer's disease, a figure that is expected to grow by nearly 20 percent in the next five years. Despite our aging population, there is a shortage of qualified healthcare workers which could jeopardize care for individuals living with Alzheimer's and related dementia (ADRD); cost of care for the population with ADRD—currently estimated at over \$1 billion—would continue to rise. **Big picture, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there will be an additional 1.1 million new direct care workers that will be needed by 2024, which is a 26 percent increase from 2014.**

This legislation builds on the Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) program, which provides general fund grants on a competitive basis for industry partnerships, workforce training programs, and job-readiness and skills training and invests in several direct care workforce training programs across the State. This legislation provides specific grants to develop and implement a strategy for the recruitment, retention, or advancement of direct care workers. It is vital, it is necessary, and long term—it will save lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important legislation.

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