

**LD 1097: An Act to Develop and Distribute Work Training Pamphlets to Educate State Agencies, Private Businesses and other Organizations about Dementia**

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**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

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Thank you, Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson and sitting members of the committee for holding today's public hearing. We applaud your leadership on issues important to Mainers with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementias, and their caregivers. We appreciate the opportunity to voice our support for LD 1097.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, neurodegenerative and fatal disease for which there is currently no treatment or cure. Alzheimer's kills more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined. Alzheimer's was identified by the New England Journal of Medicine as the most expensive disease in the United States, costing the nation \$257 billion in 2017. Implementing state policy solutions like LD 1097 now is crucial if we are to address this growing public health crisis.

In Maine, there are currently 27,000 people age 65 and older living with Alzheimer's disease, with an additional 69,000 people providing 988 million dollars in unpaid care and support for them this year. Nearly half of Alzheimer's caregivers had to reduce their own expenses – including food, medical care, and transportation – to pay for dementia-related care for a loved one with Alzheimer's. These family caregivers are 28% more likely than other adults to eat less or go hungry because they cannot afford food due to the high out of pocket expenses. To put this in context, the out of pocket expenses for Alzheimer's are 200% higher than cancer, and 74% higher than cardiovascular disease. Caregivers who lost income because they had to cut back or quit work to meet the demands of caregiving, lost, on average, \$15,000 a year. One in five had to spend money from their own retirement savings to help pay for dementia-related care. Many had to sell personal belongings and cut back on spending for their children's education. MaineCare costs are roughly 19 times higher for seniors living with Alzheimer's and dementia than costs for other seniors which leads to a growing impact on our state budget. This year Alzheimer's will cost MaineCare \$187 million dollars. LD 1097 will help bring these costs down.

By better informing area businesses, agencies, and other community institutions and organizations, LD 1097 combats the stigma and misinformation associated with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Stigma and misinformation are major barriers keeping people from getting an accurate early diagnosis and appropriate care planning. 75% of Mainers with cognitive impairment have not talked with a health care provider. Of those living with dementia in Maine only 50% have received a diagnosis and only about a third of those have been informed of their diagnosis. New research from Tufts Medical Center demonstrates that an early accurate diagnosis and appropriate care planning would prevent one out of every seven hospitalizations of people with Alzheimer's, saving the nation an estimated \$2.6 billion dollars annually in Medicare costs alone. All too often people affected by this devastating disease aren't taking medical action until they find themselves in a crisis situation, resulting in very expensive emergency care. LD 1097 will help prevent this.

**State Plan Implementation is the Driving Force Behind Meeting These Needs.** In 2011 Governor LePage signed the *State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias in Maine* into law. The state plan clearly shows that we must work together to implement the recommendations in this plan, and

we cannot do this without support and active engagement from the legislature. There are several recommendations in the State Plan that correspond with LD 1097 including Part II, Objective 2, Strategy 7 (pg 20) and Strategy 11 (pg 21), as well as Part V, Strategy 26 (pg 46).

The Alzheimer's Association, Maine Chapter strongly urges members of the committee to help pass LD 1097. We often say, "You can try and ignore this disease but it will not ignore you." Dispelling misinformation, stigma and encouraging early diagnosis is crucial to combat this devastating disease. LD 1097 aims to do just that. Thank you for holding today's hearing and for your continued leadership on issues that are so important to individuals and families facing Alzheimer's disease. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to improve care and support for individuals and families affected by this disease.

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**REFERENCE:**

*Alzheimer's Association's 2017 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures*  
[http://www.alz.org/documents\\_custom/2017-facts-and-figures.pdf](http://www.alz.org/documents_custom/2017-facts-and-figures.pdf)

*Potentially Avoidable Hospitalizations among Medicare Beneficiaries with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders* (Tufts Medical Center)  
[http://www.alzheimersanddementia.com/article/S1552-5260\(12\)02520-4/abstract](http://www.alzheimersanddementia.com/article/S1552-5260(12)02520-4/abstract)

*State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia in Maine*  
<http://act.alz.org/site/DocServer/ALZStatePlanwithAppendix.pdf?docID=13302>

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