

Subject: The Need for the DC Council to Create & Fund the Position of Dementia Services Coordinator

For: DC Council Committee on Health Hearing on Performance Oversight of the DC Department of Health

From: Testimony by Dean Brenner, 5044 Macomb Street, NW, Washington DC 20016

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Chairman Gray and Members of the Committee, my name is Dean Brenner, and I live in Ward 3. I'm testifying to ask for your support to create and fund the position of Dementia Services Coordinator in DC. Today, no person in the Health Department or in any other DC government office or department is in charge of providing information and support to the approximately 8,900 DC residents living with Alzheimer's disease and their families. Alzheimer's is the most expensive disease in America. DC spends over \$120 million just in the Medicaid costs for people age 65 or older with Alzheimer's.

Many states, including Virginia and Georgia, have a Dementia Services Coordinator to lead their efforts to help people deal with the costly & devastating impacts of Alzheimer's. It's time for DC to have a Dementia Services Coordinator too. Today, there is no one in the DC government with the job of helping the thousands of people living with Alzheimer's and their families find information and support. Alzheimer's is a public health crisis, but the DC Health Department

does not have any dedicated full-time staff working on Alzheimer's. Creating and funding a Dementia Services Coordinator would fill this critical gap.

In 2013, DC released the DC State Plan for Alzheimer's for 2014-2019. The plan listed short, medium, and long-term goals. For each goal, the plan identified organizations responsible for achieving the goal, including the Health Department and other DC agencies. Six years after the plan's release, most of the goals have not been achieved.

We must do better. We should have a Dementia Services Coordinator in charge of coordinating the District's efforts to help residents deal with the impacts of Alzheimer's.

Unfortunately, I am speaking today from personal experience. My mother died in September 2018 after a four-year fight with Alzheimer's. My mother was a remarkable person. She was the first woman in the history of her town in New Jersey elected to the town's council, and she served for 21 years on the board of education.

When my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, she initially hid it from me. I later found out that she had suffered a number of calamities—she drove with an expired driver's license, she did not pay her utility bills, and she missed and cancelled doctor's appointments. She needed help, but she was afraid and unable

to seek it. This is a very common situation. Eventually, I learned of the diagnosis, and I wanted to help her desperately, but I didn't know where to begin.

I looked on many web sites, and I called every department and service provider I could find. I got nowhere. Finally, thank goodness, I called the Alzheimer's Association, and they referred me to several extremely helpful people outside of the government, and fortunately, I was able to get some help for my mom. I am very lucky, but others are not so lucky. Many other people with Alzheimer's and their families never find the help they need.

I urge you to address create and fund the position of Dementia Services Coordinator. Creation of a coordinator would ensure that there is a single, clear point of responsibility in the DC government for supporting people living with Alzheimer's and their families.

Thank you.