

# alzheimer's association™

Human Services Committee  
Public Hearing, March 6th, 2007  
S.B. 1273 (Raised) An Act Concerning Respite Care Services  
For Caretakers of Persons With Alzheimer's disease

Testimony of Winston Heimer, volunteer, advocate and caregiver, Connecticut Chapter,  
Alzheimer's Association

Senator Harris and Representative Villano and members of the Human Services  
Committee:

My name is Winston Heimer, and I live in West Hartford. I am the sole caregiver for my  
wife Carol who was diagnosed at age 60 with early onset Alzheimer's.

I am here to speak in favor of Raised Senate Bill 1273, an act that would increase the  
funding level of the state respite care program and increase the grant amount available to  
caregivers.

I am not a recipient of the respite care program because I am fortunate enough right now  
to have the ability to pay for respite care. However, I do know that there are numerous  
individuals around the state who cannot afford to do what I can do for Carol. What I can  
share with you is the value of respite periods because caring for someone with  
Alzheimer's can prolong their ability and mine to care for loved ones at home longer.

Respite care gives me time to take a break; time for rest or relief from daily concerns;  
time to pursue some of my interests. It helps give me the strength to continue taking care  
of Carol at home. It also gives her the chance to interact with others.

Care giving for a family member is very stressful and in fact in many cases the person  
with Alzheimer's will outlive the caregiver because of the constant 24/7 supervision  
required to take care of that person. This is the importance of respite.

There are 68,000 individuals in Connecticut with Alzheimer's. There are more people  
with Alzheimer's disease than the residents of Bristol, or Greenwich or West Hartford.  
The baby boomer population has arrived and the incidence of this disease will  
dramatically increase. At age 65 one in ten will be diagnosed. At 85, one half of the  
population will be diagnosed and the other half will be taking care of them.

I ask you to support this legislation and fund the respite care program to \$ 5 million and  
to increase the grant amount up to \$ 7500. What is \$7500? It is the equivalent of two days  
a week placing someone in an adult day care center. Alzheimer's requires 24/7. This  
increase is the equivalent of a respite break of 16 hours a week out of a total of 168 hours  
of care giving.

(over)

The benefits and the need for this program are many. It helps people like me caring for a loved one to keep that person at home for as long as possible. In doing that, we keep them out of the most expensive alternative, nursing homes. So the program is good for the caregiver, the person that is being cared for and for the taxpayers of the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.