alzheimer's association

Position Statement in support of Raised Bill #558-An Act Concerning the Availability of Hospice Services Under the Medicaid Program

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The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals, and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hours, 7 Day a week Helpline.

Currently in Connecticut, there are approximately 68,000 individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease. The progressive nature of the disease affects cognitive, physical, and social abilities. A person in the late stage of the illness usually:

- Has difficulty eating and swallowing
- Needs assistance walking and eventually become bedridden or chair-bound
- Needs full-time help with personal care, including toileting
- Is vulnerable to infections and pneumonia
- Loses the ability to communicate with words

Hospice services to individuals affected with Alzheimer's disease provide comfort and support to the families affected. Hospice care ensures that special attention is paid to the individual, focusing on addressing pain issues, and promoting a comfortable, peaceful, and dignified environment. The Alzheimer's Association supports amending the Medicaid state plan to include hospice services that include a provision of bereavement services, as a covered service under the state's Medicaid program. Individuals who are receiving Medicaid assistance should be allowed to access hospice services as part of a comprehensive care plan, increasing the quality of end of life care for those affected.

The Alzheimer's Association also supports amending the Medicaid state plan to include foreign language interpreter services. Individuals with Alzheimer's disease often will revert to speaking the first language that was learned as the disease progresses. If this language is not English, communicating can pose a challenge and interpreters are necessary to communicate and deliver high quality care.