



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

TESTIMONY
of
Laurie Julian
Before the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
of the
Connecticut General Assembly
S.B. 1, An Act Concerning the Preservation and Creation of Jobs in Connecticut
March 1, 2010

Chairpersons Senator Eileen Daily, Rep. Cameron Staples and Honorable Members of the Committee my name is Laurie Julian, Public Policy Director of the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter. I am here today to testify about this devastating disease and its economic costs, and ask you to support re-opening the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program (see **Section 1 of H.B. 5111, An Act Concerning the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program**).

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 hour, 7 day a week Helpline.

Alzheimer's disease costs American businesses \$61 billion a year. Of that figure, \$24.6 billion covers Alzheimer health care and \$36.5 billion covers costs related to caregivers

of individuals with Alzheimer's, including lost productivity, absenteeism and worker replacement.¹

Currently in Connecticut there are approximately 70,000 residents who have Alzheimer's and related dementias with over 113,000 caregivers. Those caregivers, usually family, provide over 97 million hours of unpaid care that would equal over a billion dollars. The Respite program allows many of these families the time they need to keep their loved one home.

Recent studies have documented the harm that Alzheimer's disease does to the informal caregiver. This disease can affect a caregiver's health, resulting in a measurable reduction in the caregiver's own life expectancy. It can also affect a family's economic security, as spouses and children are forced to leave their jobs to care for an aging relative with the disease. These are the indirect costs attributed to quitting one's job to provide uncompensated care at home.

The Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, commissioned by the legislature,² reports that informal caregivers are family and friends who provide care without pay, and are the primary source of long-term care. Seventy percent of people with Alzheimer's disease live at home, cared for by family and friends. The importance of unpaid care provided by family and friends cannot be overemphasized, as it constitutes the back bone of the long-term care system.

Unfortunately, this comes at a price in terms of compromising the caregivers' health. Due to the specialized care required of Alzheimer and dementia patients, we hear from caregivers who endure overwhelming stress and are at their breaking points.

For many, the grants awarded through the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program has extended the patients' care allowing them to continue to live at home while it affords the

¹ Koppel, R. Alzheimer's disease: *The Costs to U.S. Businesses in 2002*. Washington, D.C.: Alzheimer's Association; 2002.

² Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment (P.A. 06-188) is the first comprehensive statewide study to help guide crucial planning and was funded by the Connecticut General Assembly.

caregiver much needed relief, permitting the caregiver to maintain employment outside the home.

The Long Term Care Needs Assessment predicts there will be a demand for over 9,000 jobs in the health care industry over the next five years to serve the growing/aging population. The average cost of health and long-term care for people with Alzheimer's is 3 times the average cost incurred by individuals 65 and older without this condition, due to the specialized care required of Alzheimer's patients. Alzheimer's disease is predicted to expand rapidly in the coming years.

In closing, the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program with its support services employs companions and homemakers, home aides, adult day care centers, personal care assistants and case managers, preserving and creating thousands of sorely needed jobs in the health care industry. Given that the long-term care industry employs more people than nearly any other industry, and direct-care jobs are the employment core of this industry and are among the nation's fastest-growing occupations, the Respite Program is a small investment, which protects the care of the Alzheimer's patient and caregiver while preserving and creating jobs in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me if you have questions or concerns.

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