

Testimony of Eugene Swain

Before the Appropriations Committee
March 4, 2011

Senator Toni Harp, Representative Toni Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee, my father in law came to this country as a child and lived the American dream. He was educated here as a chemist and was very successful in his career and handsomely compensated. He retired in 1985 and remained a leader in the community in civics, church, and sports, especially golf and tennis. He assumed the role of proud and wise grandparent to three children. He remained the leader of his family in every way, and passed along to everyone the greatness of this country and its endless opportunity for those who were willing to sacrifice to reach goals. He was a model citizen, husband, father, and friend. He had years of great contributions left to make.

Then came the diagnosis of Alzheimer's. It has been 5 years now, and instead of contributing to the world around him he is totally dependant on others. The physical and emotional cost that came before and since entering a facility to deal with the burdens of this disease is heartbreaking. The cost continues as his daughters routinely need to miss time from work and away from their homes to support him and their mother as she continues as best she can to give all their lives some normalcy.

You have all heard of the horrors of this disease upon the afflicted and the family. I am here to tell you it is much worse than you imagine. The family caretakers' job never ends, and unless they are afforded some relief they also are susceptible to illness and disease caused by exhaustion and despair.

That is why I urge you to support retaining the line-item funding for the Respite Care Program for caregivers of Alzheimer's patients. These caregivers are heroes whose exploits go unsung. They are indispensable in carrying on against this disease. They need and deserve your help.

Thank you.

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