

February 25, 2014

Dear Senator Ayala, Representative Serra and Members of the Aging Committee:

I am an advocate for the Elderly with a focus in Dementia care. I would like to present my testimony on SB179 to support the training of a variety of professionals that care for people with Alzheimer's and dementia related disease.

Please take a moment and think about your daily routine. We all can relate to the importance of our routine because it creates a sense of normalcy for us. Now imagine your routine disrupted or changed dramatically. For most people this creates an uncomfortable feeling at the least, confusion, anxiety, and fear at the extreme. Now add in the fact that you can't express yourself clearly or make someone understand your confusion, anxiety and fear. What would you do? How would you react? The many behaviors expressed by people with Alzheimer's disease or dementia are their way of communicating. They live in the past not in the present.

I knew a gentleman that grew up on a farm. Prior to being placed in a dementia unit he managed his own farm and worked for his towns DOT. Every day around 4:00 p.m. he became restless because it was time to feed and milk the cows. He was so worried about his cows. We reassured him that someone was taking care of his cows. In addition, there are many women at this point in time, that were "housewives" their entire life. Every day around 4:00 p.m. some of the women on the dementia unit became restless because they had to get home and make supper for their family. They become anxious because they cannot go home and care for their family. In each case we knew that this behavior would happen every day so the aides and other personnel tried to engage everyone in an activity to distract them and prevent them from escalating into a frenzy. Engaging them in an activity works most of the time.

My experience working with people that have Alzheimer's disease or dementia has opened my eyes to how delicate they are. It is extremely important to know a person's personal history, likes and dislikes in order to defuse, redirect and calm a person who could potentially escalate in to a frenzy. It is important to maintain their dignity and make them feel safe in their environment. There are basic steps someone could take to help a person with Alzheimer's disease or dementia stay calm. It will benefit everyone involved in their care.

These steps could be a breakthrough for a better understanding and a natural way of defusing, redirecting or calming our delicate population of Alzheimer's and dementia patients. The passing of SB179 will be a beginning to educate the front line care professionals.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. I am available for further discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Toni M. Dumaine". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Toni Marie Dumaine
Advocate for the Elderly