

February 10, 2016

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am very concerned that funding for Alzheimer's services may be cut. As a caregiver, I am well aware of the high level of care it takes to help a person with Alzheimer's disease remain with their family. The services offered by the Alzheimer's Association and the Agency on Aging are absolutely critical to the well-being of the entire family that has chosen to endure this high level of care; those Agencies help alleviate the stress of this horrible disease that one day may strike any of us. I can tell you that being a witness to the unexpected symptoms of this disease as my parents deteriorated, and bearing the burden of sadness that has been placed on my shoulders has brought me to both of these agencies many times, leaving me no choice but to write for your assistance.

My parents moved in with us when my father was diagnosed in 2010. He was so precious to us and we wanted him to remain home so his end of life was not filled with the symptoms of anxiety and fear, but instead the familiar surroundings and the voices of family, whom he took such great care of, prior to his disease. We also wanted to assure him that care for my mom, after his death, would continue at home. Alzheimer's patients require 24/7 attention and access to resources that are not often easy to acquire or foresee.

The Agency on Aging was there to guide me; my dad died in our home in his own bed in July of 2012. But that is not to say it was easy or "neat". On the contrary, it was brutal at times. So it was with a heavy heart that I took the news that my mom was also diagnosed right before my dad passed away. Once again, the Agency on Aging stepped in to offer guidance, a home visit and information on transportation and alternative care. The Alzheimer's Association gave us a chance to have respite time after so many years of daily vigilance.

To hear that funding may be cut is scary to me. As a 45-year resident of CT my mother's story deserves to be heard. I can't be there in person due to her care but please consider my testimony. Give caregivers a place to find information and expertise and respite. Don't place yet another job of trying to go this path in life alone because I can tell you we need support from these Agencies! I ask that you consider these types of funding as preventative care. Cutting our (caregivers) support system will only place more of a burden on the State in the form of higher hospital bills, higher nursing home bills, loss of work for able citizens, and worsening of disease for those affected. Don't cut care for the people who are losing their minds bit by bit or the loved ones who care for them.

Sincerely,

Mary Palermo
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