



January 23, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is John Hennessy, and I am on the Board of Equality Maine, the oldest and largest statewide organization dedicated to creating a fair and just society for LGBTQ+ Mainers. I offer this testimony in support of **LD 2125 - An Act to Establish the Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias Advisory Council Within the Department of Health and Human Services and to Require a State Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias.**

This bill establishes the Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias Advisory Council to examine the needs of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, the services available in the State for those individuals and the ability of health care providers and facilities to meet those individuals' current and future needs.

The **Equality Maine Network for Older Adults** (formerly SAGE Maine, an affiliate of [SAGE USA](#)) is a program of Equality Maine. Equality Maine believes that diverse perspectives are critical to achieving health equity — and as it relates to Alzheimer's, it means that everyone in our communities have a fair and just opportunity for early diagnosis and access to risk reduction and quality care. The LGBTQ+ community faces challenges related to Alzheimer's and dementia. These include finding inclusive and welcoming health care providers, less ability to call upon adult children for assistance, concerns about stigma and higher rates of poverty and social isolation.

The **Network for Older Adults'** primary focus is to support and advocate on behalf of the older adults in our community and we know LGBTQ+ older people who receive a dementia diagnosis face a particularly challenging set of circumstances. LGBT older adults exhibit several health disparities, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, which increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's and other dementias. LGBT older adults are also more likely to exhibit vulnerabilities that can exacerbate how Alzheimer's disease manifests and its impact, such as disproportionately high levels of social isolation and stigmatization as they age, making it difficult to find support.

Equality Maine is eager to represent the interests of LGBTQ+ Maine people living with Alzheimer's on this new Advisory Council, and we urge your support of this bill.