



**Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on
Health and Human Services**

**In Favor 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**

Submitted on January 24, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and the members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Jess Maurer, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am testifying in favor of LD 2125.

Today I advocate for a continuation of work that is largely already being done. Maine began leading the way on dementia-related diseases back in 2011, championed by a member of this Committee, Representative Craven, and after more than a decade of work we stand before you requesting a firm commitment to make sure it goes on. Not only is codifying the Alzheimer's Disease and Other Related Dementias Advisory Council the right choice for Mainers living with these diseases, the need for this work to continue could hardly be greater.

The number of people affected by Alzheimer's disease is expected to double within the next couple of decades¹, but the services and supports needed today for those living with dementia are significantly lacking. Between the years 2020 and 2025, Alzheimer's disease is expected to increase by more than 20% among people 65 and older and we are not currently equipped to meet their needs.²

The state's continued direct care workforce shortage has ensured that needed community programming, like adult day services, remain hard to access – if available at all, and in-home supports for people who need them are becoming difficult to secure. As the disease progresses, people with Alzheimer's tend to need higher levels of care, however, Maine continues to see the shuttering of more and more skilled nursing facility beds.

These challenges often mean that it falls to the families of people with dementia to carry the burdens of providing care. There are more than 50,000 unpaid family caregivers in Maine caring for someone with dementia and providing billions of dollars' worth of care – and caring comes at

¹ (Alzheimer's Association, 2022)

² (Alzheimer's Association, 2023)

a cost. Family caregivers can feel immense stress and burnout, financial insecurity, and face physical challenges in safely delivering support.

Maine has already taken many steps in the right direction to support the needs of people with Alzheimer's and other related dementias. Programs like Respite for ME are supporting caregivers, the Department of Health and Human Services has committed to working on growing adult day programming to ensure people can stay connected to community as long as possible, and efforts remain ongoing to grow Maine's direct care workforce.

The opportunity LD 2125 presents will allow us to make sure these kinds of progress remain ongoing. The Advisory Council will help facilitate coordinated efforts, guided by best practice and stakeholder engagement to develop strategies that are informed by data and understanding. While there is much work yet to be done, this Advisory Council is a concrete step in the direction of making sure it's done right.

I urge you to support LD 2125.

Thank you.

Jess Maurer