

Testimony

Relating to

L.D. 1079, An Act to Provide Comprehensive Perimenopause and Menopause Education

Jill Carney
Director of Maine Public Policy
Alzheimer's Association, Maine Chapter

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

April 1, 2025

Senate Chair Ingwersen, House Chair Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Jill Carney, Director of Maine Public Policy for the Alzheimer's Association, and a resident of Cumberland. The Alzheimer's Association supports L.D. 1079, which would provide for comprehensive perimenopause and menopause education to Maine women. Greater understanding of links between Alzheimer's and related dementia and biological changes occurring through the period of perimenopause and menopause are emerging, and this bill could provide an opportunity for education on the warning signs of dementia, which may occur after menopause, and strategies for reducing dementia risk.

Impact of Alzheimer's on Women

Women are disproportionately impacted by Alzheimer's and other dementia, both in terms of lifetime risk and as dementia caregivers. Almost two-thirds of Americans living with Alzheimer's are women. Women in their 60s are more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease over the rest of their lives as they are to develop brain cancer. At age 65, a woman's lifetime risk of developing Alzheimer's is one in five, while a man's risk at the same age is one in ten.

Researchers are continually studying the link between estrogen levels and cognitive function, the effect menopause has on risk for dementia, and whether hormone replacement therapy increases one's risk or has a protective effect on cognitive decline in certain women.

While we don't have a definitive answer to preventing Alzheimer's, research has shown that people can take action to reduce the risk of developing it by leading a healthy lifestyle. Physical exercise, social connections, a healthy diet, and keeping mentally active all play a role. Given the increased risk women have for developing Alzheimer's and the opportunity to reduce risk with healthy lifestyle choices, reaching women in the period around perimenopause and menopause with this information can help address the public health crisis of Alzheimer's.

Jill Carney
Director of Maine Public Policy
Alzheimer's Association, Maine Chapter
383 U.S. Route One Suite 2C
Scarborough, ME 04074