

Testimony

Relating to

L.D. 763, An Act to Improve Long-term Care by Providing Funding for Nursing Facilities

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Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

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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 urges the Committee to support L.D. 763, which would provide funding of \$50 million to the Nursing Facility Transition Fund.

Alzheimer's is a progressive, fatal disease, and those with it eventually progress to needing around-the-clock care. Therefore, those with Alzheimer's are high users of long-term care services. At the age of 80, 75 percent of people with Alzheimer's live in a nursing home, compared with just four percent of the general population. In Maine, half of nursing home residents have Alzheimer's or other dementia, which is higher than the national average.

Nursing home closures across the state threatens access to care for people living with dementia. Maine has lost 25 nursing homes within the last 10 years, with 11 of these closures occurring since 2020. Hancock County now has no nursing home, and other rural counties have very limited access to remaining facilities. This trend is troubling, and we appreciate the many efforts taken by the Legislature to address this significant problem.

As the prevalence of Alzheimer's and related dementia grows in the coming years, the long-term care system, including nursing homes, will need to maintain and build

capacity, particularly in rural and underserved areas to ensure that people living with Alzheimer's who need nursing home care can receive it close to their families.

To help improve the long-term care system in Maine, the Alzheimer's Association was pleased to participate in the Department of Health and Human Services' Nursing Facility & Residential Care Innovation & Quality Advisory Council. As part of this initiative, we are interested in the success of new Value-Based Payments to help promote quality in nursing facilities. We understand, however, that the new rate system is short in funding that would enable successful implementation. Compounding this issue is the lack of cost-of-living increase in the Biennial Budget, which impairs the ability of facilities to recruit and retain direct care workers that are needed to sustain capacity.

Thank you for your consideration of L.D. 763. Again, we urge the Committee to support this legislation.

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