



**Testimony of Benjamin Hawkins, Director of Public Affairs  
Maine Health Care Association**

To the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

January 24, 2023 at 1:00 pm

*Testifying 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*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Ben Hawkins, and I serve as the Director of Public Affairs of the Maine Health Care Association. We represent approximately 200 nursing homes, assisted living centers, and residential care facilities (also known as Private Non-Medical Institutions or PNMI) across the state. Our mission is to empower members to ensure the integrity, quality, and sustainability of long term care (LTC) in Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 2125.

Maine has a history of leadership in addressing Alzheimer's disease, with the state being one of the first to create a State Alzheimer's Plan in 2011 under the initiative of Representative Craven. However, the momentum of the plan's recommendations diminished over time due to the lack of dedicated resources and staffing. In 2019, the Maine CDC was awarded funding through the BOLD Infrastructure Act grant program, initiated by Senator Susan Collins, providing resources to update the State Plan and enhance Maine's response to Alzheimer's.

The initiative to update the plan involved the Maine CDC convening a Healthy Brain Initiative stakeholder group, encompassing a diverse range of community partners and experts in various areas related to dementia. These categories include public awareness, access to care, caregiver support, workforce training, legal issues, as well as research and data. LD 2125 would help codify a similar stakeholder group and establish responsibilities for monitoring and updating the Alzheimer's State Plan, which will ensure ongoing engagement and attention to this critical issue.

Maine's long term care staff are at the forefront of caring for loved ones diagnosed with dementia. In fact, more than half of Maine's nursing home residents have dementia while the nationwide portion of nursing home residents with the diagnosis is much lower at 43.1%. This higher prevalence leads to providing more complex care, including increased staffing and training at our facilities. We openly welcome the opportunity to increase collaboration on addressing the significant challenges related to these conditions.

In conclusion, I urge the Committee on Health and Human Services to advance this bill. By doing so, Maine can build upon its legacy of leadership in addressing Alzheimer's disease and strengthen its commitment to a comprehensive and sustainable approach to tackling this pressing public health issue.

Thank you for your consideration.