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LD 1102: Resolve, to Raise Awareness of the Importance of Brain Health and Reducing the Risk
of Dementia

Testimony of the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

March 28, 2025

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and Committee members, my name is Nicole Marchesi. I am the Public Policy Advocate for the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The Ombudsman Program provides statewide advocacy services for older and disabled adult residents of nursing homes, residential care and assisted living and for recipients of home care services and adult day services.

We are pleased to support this bill that proposes allowing the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a public awareness campaign to promote brain health and risk reduction of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

The Alzheimer's Association reports nearly 7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's. In the early stages, memory loss is mild. But as the disease progresses individuals will need around the clock care. Alzheimer's is a serious and rising public health threat and in time will overwhelm our health and long-term care systems. This bill will allow people to take action to improve their brain health and when cognitive concerns arise, get early diagnosis.

As an advocacy organization we often help individuals living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers navigate the complexities to access care and quality of care in settings such as in their home, nursing homes, residential care homes and assisted housing. The Ombudsman Program sees firsthand the impact of Alzheimer's Disease on an individual. Through our advocacy efforts we see where early detection and education could have prevented a crisis such as a hospital stay

or placement in a facility. Our Homecare Ombudsmen work diligently to help navigate these complexities so individuals can age in place with hopes they do not need to go into an institutional setting.

Additionally, this bill will allow support for their caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association reports it is estimated that more than 11 million caregivers provide over 18 billion hours of care valued at over \$346.6 billion. Support is critical for those providing care as well as those receiving care.

Thank you for your consideration.