



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

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

**In Support of LD 1677, *An Act to Establish the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias  
Prevention and Support Program***

Friday, May 2, 2025 at 10:00 AM

Senator Ingwersen, 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 for the Maine Health Care Association (MHCA). We represent approximately 200 nursing homes, assisted living centers, and residential care facilities (also known as Private Non-Medical Institutions or PNMIs) across the state. Our mission is to empower members to ensure the integrity, quality, and sustainability of long term care in Maine. I am pleased to testify in support of LD 1677.

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. 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 1677 would help codify a similar group, the Healthy Brain Initiative Council, which would serve as an advisory board composed of various stakeholders who would examine the needs of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, available services, and the ability of health care providers and facilities to meet current and future needs. The council would assist the Maine CDC with creating the Alzheimer's disease and related dementias prevention and support plan, which would be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature by December 3, 2025. This bill will also help ensure ongoing engagement, monitoring, and action toward meeting the needs of Maine residents living with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias.

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, MHCA urges 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.