



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

**Testimony in Support
May 2, 2025**

Senator Baldacci , Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with more than 10,000 employees statewide.

This bill represents a primary recommendation of the Maine CDC Report on addressing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, the report was published in 2023 and contains recommendations for a state plan through 2027.

The Maine's Alzheimer's disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) State Plan recognizes the value of older adults with dementia and the need for policies aimed at enhancing prevention through early detection and diagnosis, provider to patient communication and care planning, treatment, and appropriate supports for people with dementia and their care partners and family members. Dr. Clifford Singer, MD, at Northern Light Acadia Hospital, participated in the development of this plan. Dr. Singer is a geriatric psychiatrist and serves as Director of the Mood and Memory Clinic at Acadia Hospital, one of our state's primary resources for clinical care, education and research in dementia. The long-wait times to get into this clinic underscore the growing need for services like this and how important it is to meet the goals set out by the State Plan to improve access.

We are in the middle of a large project, led by Dr. Singer and his team, funded by a federal grant to improve dementia care, not only in our system, but throughout the state. With the help of this grant, Northern Light Health has started work on carrying out some of the highest priority objectives in the State Plan related to health care professional education, recruitment of dementia specialists to Maine and collaborative research to ensure that Mainers' have access to critical research studies and new therapies. The momentum from this grant and the Maine CDC BOLD initiative, will need to be sustained and coordinated at the state level.

Northern Light Health
Government Relations
43 Whiting Hill Road
Brewer, Maine 04412

Office 207.861.3282
Fax 207.861.3044

Northern Light Health
Acadia Hospital
A.R. Gould Hospital
Blue Hill Hospital
C.A. Dean Hospital
Eastern Maine Medical Center
Home Care & Hospice
Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mayo Hospital
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It is indeed clear to us at Northern Light Health that the demand for Alzheimer's care and supportive services exceeds statewide capacity. The Maine Alzheimer's Association reports that the number of people aged 65 and older with Alzheimer's will increase from 29,000 in 2020 to 35,000 in 2025. This represents a 20.7% increase in just 5 years. Effectively meeting the needs of the Alzheimer's patients and their families requires capacity building in our health care systems and clinics, increasing the number of geriatricians and medical professionals with expertise in Alzheimer's, training and education in every Maine community, research and the need for strategic coordination of all of the short term and long term recommendations outlined in the report. I have attached the recommendations from the report to my testimony.

The bill before you today is the framework to meet a key short term recommendation – *Establish a permanent Alzheimer's and Dementia Council to advise state agencies, lead and oversee state plan implementation.*

We ask that you support this legislation to advance this critically important work.

Thank you.