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Testimony in support of LD1677

An Act to Establish the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Prevention and Support Program May 2, 2025

Good morning, My name is Marshall Cohen, I live in Portland, Maine and I am an Alzheimer's caregiver.

My wife and I participate twice a month in an Alzheimer's Support Group at the Maine Alzheimer's Association office in Scarborough.

I can tell you that every one of the individuals in that group, diagnosed patients, caregivers and friends strongly support this legislation and it's objectives.

I can also tell you from personal experience how difficult and uncertain it is to navigate the health care, insurance and care support systems when faced with these diagnoses. And I have listened around that support group table to all the other families who faced the same difficulties.

We are disappointed that the Department of Health and Human Services has chosen to oppose this legislation.

They seem to feel that all is well and services are being provided through the federal CDC grant.

But who today can really say that those services will continue?

And what structure is in place to assure they will continue.

They say we don't need another law. But we do need something to protect patients and caregivers from losing these important services. We need the ability for Alzheimer's community input and participation, as the Healthy Brain Council proposed in this bill would provide. Creating that entity, to meet 4 times a year, is not a costly thing, surely does not require a new staff position.

But it would be a significant signal of support to our community.

Maine is the only state in New England without this statutory support and back-up.

Currently, if this bill were enacted no new staff should be necessary because there is already staff designated to serve the Alzheimer's community through the federal grant.

I would urge the Committee to work to find language recognizing the current situation and mitigate any fiscal note need so this bill can get enacted.

Please use your work session to bring together the department, the Governor's office and the Alzheimer's and health care communities to develop this language, and assure our community that Maine is with them in their journey.

I know the Alzheimer's community would welcome those discussions.

Thank you very much.