

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION®

Testimony

Relating to

L.D. 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Jill Carney
Director of Maine Public Policy
Alzheimer's Association, Maine Chapter

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

February 17, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, Representative Meyer, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Jill Carney, Director of Maine Public Policy for the Alzheimer's Association, and a resident of Cumberland. The Alzheimer's Association is testifying neither for nor against L.D. 2212, but urges the Committee to consider inclusion of funding to help families affected by Alzheimer's:

- Funding as proposed in L.D. 814 to enable Maine's Area Agencies on Aging to provide additional community-based services and programs to older adults;
- An additional \$111,000 for Maine's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to maintain current staffing levels, which supports accountability and oversight of the long-term care system.

Overview of the Alzheimer's and Dementia Public Health Issue

Alzheimer's is a progressive, fatal disease affecting 29,600 Mainers aged 65 or older. In addition, there are more residents who are living with other forms of dementia or who have younger onset Alzheimer's (when Alzheimer's occurs in individuals under the age of 65). In

Maine, the Alzheimer's Association estimates that 66,000 caregivers provide 102,000,000 hours of unpaid care for people living with Alzheimer's at a total value of \$2.9 billion. As people live longer and the population ages, the prevalence of Alzheimer's will rise significantly in the coming years. Today, there are more than 7 million Americans living with Alzheimer's, and the cost of care is \$385 billion annually. By 2050, there will be 13 million Americans living with Alzheimer's, costing \$1 trillion annually.

Impact of Dementia Caregiving

Unpaid caregivers provide extensive, sometimes all-encompassing care for people living with Alzheimer's or other dementia, comprising a significant amount of unpaid labor each year. Dementia caregiving involves many hours over a long period of time, with more than one quarter of these caregivers providing full-time care (40 hours or more per week). This can have a negative impact on employment, income, and financial security.

- More than 40 percent of dementia caregivers have annual household incomes below \$50,000.
- Among those who provide dementia care and/or assist with expenses, 48 percent cut back on other spending and 43 percent cut back on savings.
- Nearly 40 percent report food insecurity – running out of food and not having money to buy more.

Finally, the demands of dementia caregiving often result in physical and mental health problems among caregivers themselves.

Investments in Community-based Services Support Families Affected by Dementia and Delay Costly Facility-Based Care

Investing in community-based programs administered by Maine's Area Agencies on Aging helps Mainers live independently for as long as possible. These programs are especially important for families affected by Alzheimer's and related dementia given the significant toll that dementia caregiving exacts. When Alzheimer's progresses, individuals eventually need around-the-clock care as they lose the ability to respond to their environment. This is why such a high percentage of nursing home and residential care residents are living with dementia. Therefore, ensuring families receive support and early education mean that more costly nursing home care can be delayed. This is particularly critical for those living in rural areas where there is more limited access to long-term care services.

People Living with Dementia are Highly Reliant on Long-Term Care and Require a Strong Ombudsman Program

Those with Alzheimer's or other dementia eventually progress to needing around-the-clock care. Therefore, those with Alzheimer's are high users of long-term care services. At the age

of 80, 75 percent of people with Alzheimer's live in a nursing home, compared with just four percent of the general population. In Maine, half of nursing home residents have Alzheimer's or other dementia, which is higher than the national average.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) is a critical component to helping families navigate the long-term care system and ensuring that both residents and families are aware of their rights and that, when concerns arise, their voices are heard. LTCOP is on the ground when facility closures occur, which continues to threaten access to care for people living with dementia, particularly in our rural communities. When quality issues arise, they work to ensure resolution and engage in monitoring activities.

As the prevalence of Alzheimer's and related dementia grows in the coming years, the long-term care system will need to not only maintain and build capacity, but also maintain and strengthen oversight and accountability to ensure that, no matter the setting, recipients receive quality care. LTCOP is essential to this aim.

Thank you for your consideration of these funding requests as the Committees continue their work on L.D. 2212.

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