

My name is Carolyn Silvius, I am a resident of Portland, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 296.

A few years ago, my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. She was living in Florida at the time and I lived in Maine. Shortly after her diagnosis, she had a stroke and needed temporary rehab care in a nursing facility. When her insurance started to run out, I was called to help decide how to accommodate her immediate needs. Unfortunately the nursing home didn't inform me about the Alzheimer's. They told me she'd had a stroke and was recovering, and would soon be able to live on her own with some help. Mama decided that it would be best if she moved to Maine and stayed with me until she could live alone, after which time, I would be able to provide the necessary help that she needed.

It wasn't until after she was in Maine that I discovered the whole truth. Both my mother and I lived on fixed incomes, so hiring help was out of the question. A new doctor brought about a change in her medications and the disease immediately worsened dramatically.

She was unable to comprehend the nature of her disease, and could not understand why she couldn't go out and explore the City on her own. She had a motorized scooter to get around on, and on the occasions that she decided to take off, there was no way I could catch up to her six miles an hour. She also didn't understand that when you pressed the walk button to cross busy streets that you needed to wait for the light to change and the traffic to stop. At home, there were just as many other problems. She kept forgetting that she was in Maine. When asked, she would reply that she was in Portland, Florida.

After a few months of this strenuous routine, for her own safety, I found it necessary to place her into nursing home care. The change caused the progress of her disease to accelerate. In the nursing home there was little for her to do other than sit and watch television.

I can't tell you how many times she told me that she just wished she could die and get it over with. At the age of 88, she did finally succumb to complications from her disease after only a year in the nursing home. Had there been a more robust support system for caregivers in place at that time, I would have been able to get the training I needed to care for her, and a better understanding of this terrible disease. I could have kept her in a caring and loving environment. She would have lived longer, been able to maintain her income so that she could provide for herself. She would have had a better and happier quality of life in her last years.

Please do whatever you can to help bring awareness that caregivers must get the support they need to provide care for their family members in the security of their own home.

Thank you,
Carolyn Silvius