



Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for the Maine People's Alliance.

I am here today to testify in favor of LD 296, Representative Cloutier's Act To Provide a Tax Credit for Family Caregivers. When I was eleven years old, my stepgrandmother died suddenly in a car accident. She was nine years younger than my grandpa and had been his rock. When she passed away, his signs of forgetfulness progressed quickly into full-fledged Alzheimer's. We didn't want him stuck in a nursing home far away from his family, so he left his home in Maryland and moved into our home here in Portland.

We became closer than ever. As his Alzheimer's progressed, his spirit became younger and younger, to the point where we were the same age. My mom would ask him to babysit me to make him feel valued, but in reality I was taking care of him. As I started going on dates, he would ask me with pepper me with questions like he was a fellow teenage boy. There was a lot of beauty in it too. Whenever we took him to Two Lights State Park he would say "This is so beautiful! How come you've never taken me here before?" Whenever my mom baked him her famous chocolate chip cake for Shabbat, he would say "This is the most amazing cake I've ever had! How come you've never made this for me before?"

But it wasn't all easy. It was incredibly difficult for my mother to watch her father forget everything that made him her father until he eventually forgot her name. Growing up, both of my parents worked full time, and caring for my grandfather full-time became an enormous financial, mental, and emotional strain.

Eventually, it became too much and we had to put him in a nearby Alzheimer's facility. While we still saw him two or three times a week, it wasn't the same. When you have Alzheimer's, everything slowly becomes unfamiliar. That happens much more quickly when you have to live with strangers, all of whom are also disoriented.

If a caregiver credit had existed back then, it would have made it easier for my family to care for my grandpa for longer. It would have allowed my parents to cut back their hours at work in order to be able to take care of him. It also would have recognized the important and incredibly difficult work that we were all doing, that countless families across our state do.

Thank you for your time and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.