



**Testimony of Marge Kilkelly on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the
Committee on Health and Human Services**

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

Submitted April 26, 2025

Thank you Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Marge Kilkelly, and I am a Policy Consultant for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) which is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. The MCOA is a unifying force across sectors that is creating a new narrative about aging and older people in Maine with the goal of building local, statewide, and national support for the systemic changes needed to support our new longevity.

I am testifying in Favor of LD 1677 An Act to Establish the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Prevention and Support Program.

Maine lived into our motto *Dirigo* by leading the way on dementia-related diseases back in 2011, championed by a member of this Committee, Representative Craven, and now 14 year later we stand before you requesting a firm commitment to make sure it goes on. Not only is codifying the Healthy Brain Initiative Stakeholder Group the right choice for Mainers living with these diseases, the need for this work to continue could hardly be greater.

After our leadership in developing a state plan, we are now finding that Maine is the only state in New England without a permanent infrastructure for addressing Alzheimer's and other dementias. It has public health programs established in law for cancer, hypertension, and asthma, among other conditions. A permanent and strategic approach to addressing Alzheimer's must be codified to ensure continued progress on a growing public health crisis.

The legislation assures that the efforts will continue not only by enshrining the Healthy Brain Initiative Stakeholder Group in law but further by requiring them to oversee the development of a State Plan on Alzheimer's which would be updated every 5 years.

In Maine approximately 10% of those over 65 or 29,600 people are living with Alzheimer's. The number of people affected by Alzheimer's disease is expected to double within the next couple of decades, but the services and supports needed today for those living with dementia are significantly lacking. While the numbers grow we are not even equipped to meet current needs.

The state's continued direct care workforce shortage has ensured that needed community programming, like adult day services, remain hard to access – if available at all, and in-home supports for people who need them are becoming difficult to secure. As the disease progresses, people with Alzheimer's tend to need higher levels of care, however, Maine continues to see the shuttering of more and more skilled nursing facility beds.

These challenges often mean that it falls to the families of people with dementia to carry the burdens of providing care. There are more than 50,000 unpaid family caregivers in Maine caring for someone with dementia and providing billions of dollars' worth of care – and caring comes at a cost. Family caregivers can feel immense stress and burnout, financial insecurity, and face physical challenges in safely delivering support.

One of the four major focus areas of the current plan is Assure a Competent Workforce¹, we believe that it is essential to continue the effort of workforce development as we are going to be able to provide the care and services to those people living with Alzheimer's and their families.

I urge your support of LD 1677.

¹ <https://www.alzimpact.org/Maine-State-Plan-2023#:~:text=Maine's%20ADRD%20State%20Plan%20recognizes,their%20care%20partners%20and%20family>