

Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter

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April 28, 2023

Dear Members of the Human Services Omnibus Conference Committee:

The Alzheimer's Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting people living with Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia. We are writing today to share our support for the numerous positive provisions in both the House and Senate bills that will benefit our members and supporters.

The challenges facing the long-term care workforce are well-documented and we support efforts these budget bills take to address this crisis. However, we are particularly grateful that both bills also focuses on unpaid caregivers and the foundational role they play in keeping loved ones at home, where they want to be, and out of more expensive and intensive settings like an Assisted Living or nursing home. In 2022, 163,000 Minnesota caregivers provided 225 million hours of unpaid care for a loved one with dementia valued at \$5.259 billion dollars. This comes at a cost. The stress and emotional toll of caring for a loved one with dementia leads to higher rates of chronic conditions like depression or hypertension and caregivers are burning out at increasing rates. Caregiver burnout is the leading reason for placement in a more expensive residential setting.

With this in mind, here are the items we strongly support in both bills:

- **Respite Care Grants HF 1298 (Edelson) / SF 1020 (Maye Quade):** Expanding access to respite care is a top priority for the Alzheimer's Association and we are grateful that both bills extend funding for respite care grants for older adults and people with dementia. We prefer the larger senate investment of \$6.786 million and hope that as the final budget is developed we can secure base funding for much needed respite care funding.
- **Live Well at Home Grants HF 1851 (Hicks) / SF 1902 (Nelson):** Thank you to both the House and Senate for the infusion of resources in a proven program like the Live Well at Home Grants. This will help more elders and people with dementia remain at home with the people they love and the community they know. We prefer the language and higher appropriation in the Senate version and urge the conference committee to consider base funding for this program.

We are also excited to see an investment in the following programs in both bills:

- **PACE Study:** We appreciate the one-time funding to develop a payment model for PACE programs, which will improve the support for seniors with complex health needs.
- **Elder Waiver:** We applaud the significant and much needed increase to the Elderly Waiver, Alternative Care Waiver, and Essential Community Supports Program. This will help more people with Alzheimer's remain in the community with their loved ones. We prefer the investment in the House version.
- **Ombudsman for Long-Term Care:** People with Dementia and their caregivers face significant challenges navigating a complex elder care system and are at greater risk of maltreatment. We appreciate this investment in the OOLTC and prefer the larger Senate appropriation.

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Senate-Only positions we support

- **MA Spenddown:** Reducing the burden of the MA spenddown is a welcome step in the right direction
- **Nursing Home Funding:** Resources for nursing homes will also make a difference for our members and we were glad to see additional funding

House-Only Positions we support:

- **Native Elder Coordinator Position at MBA:** Indigenous communities in Minnesota face unique challenges and experience elevated rates of Alzheimer's Disease or another form of dementia. Investing in the capacity of the Minnesota Board on Aging with the Native Elder Coordinator Position will provide better service coordination and improve supports for indigenous Minnesotans.

The Alzheimer's Association is grateful for the leadership of Chair Hoffman and Chair Noor on elder care issues. We urge the Conference Committee to follow through on these commitments and invest in the resources and supports necessary for people with Alzheimer's or another dementia to remain at home with the people they love. Thank you for your time and hard work this session. We are happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Sam Smith
State Affairs Manager
Alzheimer's Association