

Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter

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Dear Members of the Human Services Finance Committee:

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The Alzheimer's Association would like to share our support of HF 1298 and the loved ones who provide care for someone living with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. Alzheimer's Disease is a public health crisis that demands urgent action from policy makers. In 2020, there were 99,000 Minnesotans living with Alzheimer's Disease or another form of dementia. That number is expected to increase by 21.2% by 2025. This comes at great personal cost to Minnesota families, yet the state feels these impacts as well. Minnesota spent \$905 million dollars a year in 2020 on Alzheimer's disease and other dementia in Medicaid. These costs are projected to increase by 20.1% by 2025.

The challenges facing the long-term care workforce are well-documented and we support efforts this committee is taking to address this crisis. However, not enough attention is given to 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 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.

In a 2021 study on the trajectory of the Elderly Waiver in MN commissioned by DHS, a key finding is that "there is a progressive need that builds over years before individuals join EW. This creates multiple contacts with the DHS system prior to eligibility and an opportunity to provide lower levels of support and guidance that may delay or prevent spenddown to MA or more costly support through MA/EW. Areas for opportunity in earlier supports include expanding existing programs such as Essential Community Supports and Alternative Care and expanding existing MA programs to provide earlier home and community-based supports prior to EW eligibility." Expanding access to respite care will allow more people with dementia to be where they want to be; at home with the people they love.

Sincerely,

Sam Smith
State Affairs Manager
Alzheimer's Association