

HB 1012

House Judiciary Committee

Testimony of Christine Webster, Junior Undergraduate Student, Social Work, University of Mary Social Work program in support

January 25, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christine Webster, I am a student at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota and I am testifying in support of House Bill 1012. My family have been the caregivers in the last 8 months for my grandmother, Barbara, who is living with dementia. She is a dear soul who is both spunky and cute. Even when she is in a bad mood you can't help but giggle. She is about 5 foot 5 inches, 85 years old and still walking outside to feed our goats in the morning. Our family has definitely experienced the highs and lows of caring for a person living with dementia. Dementia has always seemed like a distant issue to me—like a disease that only happened to people once in a blue moon. Unfortunately, it's more common than I thought. I started working as a caregiver at an assisted living facility where several of the residents were suffering from dementia. It was difficult for me to understand at first, but then I began to sympathize with their situation and I enjoyed working with those particular residents.

My family is caring for my grandmother in a beautiful way, but there are hard times when I have encouraged my mother to hire a direct care service provider to come a few times a week. The provider would maybe make breakfast for my grandma and do activities with her so that not all of the pressure would be on my mother and two highschool brothers. It is difficult for my mom to finish raising kids while also caring for her mother in this way. Among Alzheimer's and

dementia caregivers in North Dakota, *more than half* provide care to their parent or their parent-in-law. My mom's experience as a caregiver is shared with many other families. There are, of course, online groups and activities for elderly with dementia through the Alzheimer's Association, but my grandmother has a hard time understanding technology and doing activities over a computer would be too confusing for her. I think it is really important that we keep funds enabling caregivers to provide care at home, including the services that the Alzheimer's Association is providing through the Dementia Care Services Program. They are experts that meet with families to help guide and support them through this journey, educate them about the type of dementia they are dealing with and help connect them with available resources.

Thank you for your time and attention, I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.