



Minnesota - North Dakota Chapter

**Testimony  
House Bill 1012  
House Appropriations  
Human Services Division  
Rep. Jon O. Nelson, Chairman  
January 23, 2025**

Good morning Chairman Nelson and members of the committee. My name is Melanie Gaebe and I am the North Dakota Policy Director for the Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. We have eight staff who provide programs and support to North Dakota residents impacted by Alzheimer's and other dementia, and their caregivers. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of House Bill 1012. I stand here in support of the Adults and Aging Services budget proposals, in general and the Dementia Care Services Program funding specifically.

The Adults and Aging Services division administers our contract but we partner in so many ways beyond that one contract. There are many programs administered by the division who refer clients to us for assistance and we refer many clients to their support programs and services. This partnership continues to be a vital part of how we support people living with dementia and their caregivers.

Alzheimer's and dementia touch our lives as caregivers, loved ones, friends, and family; for those in the room today, please raise your hand if your life has been touched by this disease. And for those of you who may be new to the HR division, this is one of our standard questions. In the 2009 session, the legislature had the forethought to acknowledge how difficult Alzheimer's and other dementias are for the people living with the disease and their caregivers. That acknowledgement turned into action and the Dementia Care Services Program was the result.

The Dementia Care Services Program began in 2010, and we appreciate the continued funding included in this bill for the Dementia Care Services Program. Through the 15 year partnership between the State and the Alzheimer's Association, we have provided a lifeline for thousands of North Dakota families facing the unknown of living with or caring for someone with memory loss. The map provided shows the number of unduplicated caregivers and people living with dementia in each county who have received services since July 1, 2023. The Dementia Care Services Program has also provided dementia education for tens of thousands of community members and professionals across the state.

The Dementia Care Services Program has a number of goals. We provide information and education to professionals and the public regarding the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, the benefits of early detection and diagnosis, the availability of treatments, research opportunities, and available services. We also provide individuals with symptoms in alignment with mild cognitive impairment or dementia and their caregivers with consultation services and facilitate referrals to support their needs. Finally, we offer on demand training to direct care providers who manage and provide for the care of individuals with symptoms in alignment with mild cognitive impairment or dementia. The innovative services we provide allow people to remain safely in their homes and communities, delaying the need to be placed in long-term care facilities.

Dementia that is unmanaged negatively impacts the individual living with the disease, their caregivers, and ultimately creates a costly toll for communities and on the economy. The Dementia Care Services Program can help reduce higher costs related to dementia care. For example, studies have consistently shown that active management of dementia can improve the quality of life of affected individuals and their caregivers. Consider, for the current contract period, July 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024, this program has:

- Delivered **2,020** Care Consultations and Information and Referrals - for **1,217** caregivers on behalf of **698** people living with dementia, including **17** veterans living with dementia;
- Educated **2,932** community members across the state;
- Trained **110** law enforcement and **818** health care professionals; and
- Referred **57** people directly to the Aging and Disability Resource LINK.

The need for care and support across North Dakota continues to grow. Currently, just over eleven percent of our citizens over the age of 65 are living with dementia. As the number of people over the age of 65 grows, it will mean an increasing need for the services we provide.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I am happy to take any questions you might have.