

House Bill No. 1433

House Human Services Committee

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Human Services Committee. I am Scott Bernstein, Executive Director of Guardian and Protective Services and board member of the Guardianship Association of North Dakota.

Until we hear these remarkable words, “We can now reverse and cure Alzheimer’s” we must face this monster that is impacting over 14,000 North Dakotans, and 19,000 care givers. However, those impacted by Alzheimer’s goes well beyond the individuals with a diagnosis and their caregivers. Emergency service providers, bankers, pharmacists, physicians, clergy, the wait staff at the local restaurant, extended family, and friends are not exempt. In other words, the ripple effect of Alzheimer’s and early cognitive impairment is enormous. From Fortuna to Hankinson and Pembina to Bowman the ripple is felt.

As guardians we work with clients that have an Alzheimer’s diagnosis. We are entrusted with the responsibility of wrapping these clients with services. Unfortunately, minimal understanding regarding the disease or early detection put these vulnerable individuals at risk. We have witnessed firsthand the enhancement in the quality of life that results when basic education regarding the disease is provided.

There are remarkable things happening across the State. However, coordinating efforts is essential to create better outcomes for the individuals with a diagnosis and for all the rest of us desiring to do the very best we can for those impacted with this disease.

I stand in support of this bill. North Dakota blazed a trail when they partnered with the Alzheimer’s Association. It has been a remarkable partnership and the legislature should be proud of their decision. Here is another opportunity to make a significant life-changing impact. I know this probably isn’t the slogan you would want on the Visitor Bureau website: “North Dakota, A Dementia Friendly State.” But this new position has the potential to make that a reality. And you know what, at the end of the day, I would be proud to wear that badge. This position can make that a reality.

I appreciate your time, and I would be happy to take any questions.