

House Human Services Committee

House Bill 1433

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Rebecca Quinn, and I serve as the associate director for behavioral health at the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences. In 2021, the Center for Rural Health was contracted by the North Dakota Department of Health to update the state plan for Alzheimer's and related dementias.

North Dakota's previous plan was written in July of 2007 and is less than two pages. Although it does mention Alzheimer's and other dementias, it does not specifically outline a plan to address services for those living with, or supporting those living with, dementia in North Dakota.

The 2021 plan identifies broad goals and numerous actionable objectives, that if addressed, would promote the shared vision of creating an inclusive community and health system that understands, respects, and supports people who are at-risk of or diagnosed with Alzheimer's and other dementias and their caregivers.

These goals were developed in partnership with community stakeholders, caregivers, representation from Medicaid, medical and community care providers, state and national organizations, and associations. The state plan illustrates a strong commitment to work together. Despite this strong collaborative commitment, there was a key theme missing regarding who will be tasked with doing the work of the plan and how stakeholders will ensure the plan does not just sit on a shelf.

House Bill 1433 tasks the state with implementing the state plan. As a key author in writing it, I stand in full support that it should be implemented. More importantly, the bill develops a coordinator position to shepherd the implementation and lead the charge of updating the plan every three years. The creation of a dementia coordinator position is key to ensure that the work stays relevant and there is consistent follow-through.

Even though the existing state plan is only a few years old, it is already losing relevance and needs to be updated. Alzheimer's and dementia research is advancing our understanding of the disease at an extraordinary pace. Three years ago, the state plan was on the leading edge and held up as an example to other states. Today, the state plan is collecting dust on a shelf, HB 1433 could change that and put North Dakota back on the leading edge.

Additionally, the legislation would task the coordinator with collecting and disseminating data. As part of the development of the state plan we worked with the state epidemiology office in developing a report on Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia to compile all the currently available data into one centrally located place. This section of the bill will ensure that this data continues to be available and compiled on a regular basis to assist in planning and monitoring the impact of the disease in our state.

The final portion of the bill is to implement a public awareness campaign. If you were to ask me the one key message we received during the development of the state plan it was this: there needs to be more awareness. Families wished they had understood sooner, patients wished they had known the risks sooner, and professionals wanted to have reached people quicker. It all amounted to the need to raise the general awareness regarding Alzheimers and other dementias and reduce the stigma.

To view North Dakota's report on Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia and the current state plan go to

<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/health/data-statistics>

Thank you for your consideration,

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