

HB 7542 Alzheimer's Coordinator

To: Chairwoman Donovan and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am Dan Liparini, a resident of North Kingstown, and I am writing in support of this bill which creates the position of dementia services coordinator within the department of health to coordinate the department's approach to Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

There are 24,000 Rhode Islanders living with Alzheimer's. With our increasing population of seniors, this number will only grow. Right now, there is little coordination between state departments on the best way to handle patients with this terrible disease. More than 30 other states have already recognized the benefits of a coordinated approach and have a full-time coordinator for this disease. We need to do the same.

States with coordinators have already seen the benefits of better coordination across agencies, reduced duplication, more effective use of existing resources and more successful implementation of the state Alzheimer's plans.

My sister had this disease in another state without such coordination. When my nephew and his wife understood the challenge they faced trying to keep her safe and trying to determine the best way to help her, they got conflicting information from the state agencies they contacted. Several times one agency referred them back to an agency that they had already contacted. The lack of coordination led to delays in her effective treatment which resulted in an abrupt emergency placement into a facility. This further disoriented my sister, and she became very resistant and required medication to calm her down. Her condition rapidly deteriorated and she passed away within a couple of months.

Whether earlier and effective treatment would have prevented her reaction to the placement is beyond my knowledge. But I do know the aggravation and stress it put on my nephew and his wife and my sister's grandchildren who had to deal with this.

We need to do better in assisting families who must deal with loved ones who are affected by Alzheimer's. This bill is a great step.

Dan Liparini