

**Karen Friend
4 Old Tannery Rd.
Providence, RI 02906**

To: Rhode Island House, Health
and Human Services Committee
Chair Rep. Susan R. Donovan
Re: House Bill 7542

Dear Ms. Donovan and Committee members:

I am a researcher and evaluator at Brown University's Department of Public Health and at Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. I am also the widow of Jacob Vinton, who passed away from early onset Alzheimer's Dementia at the age 60 in 2016. I am writing in support of House Bill 7542, to establish a permanent, full-time Dementia Services Coordinator at the Rhode Island Department of Health.

I can say from first-hand experience that a Dementia Services Coordinator would be vital for the 24,000 Rhode Islanders living with Alzheimer's; the 37,000 estimated caregivers; and the uncounted number of soon-to-be diagnosed residents and subsequent associated caregivers of our state. From my personal experience, it was somewhat ironic to have a long-time career in research and yet to find that locating services for Jake was a scattered and challenging experience. Without a centralized source of information, even though I was fortunate to have the assistance of the Alzheimer's Association, I still found the job very difficult; even more so because I still was trying to maintain a demanding full-time career. A Dementia Services Coordinator would have made my and others' lives much easier.

There is also the fiscal consideration for the state. Alzheimer's represents a public health crisis, and one of the expensive diseases in the country. By 2050, an estimated 12.7 million will be diagnosed with the illness, and Medicaid spending on those with Alzheimer's will increase by more than 200%. The investment in a Dementia Services Coordinator would be a relatively inexpensive way to help fill the gap in services accessibility and provision. Anything that keeps families from operating from crisis to crisis and for the state to avoid duplication of, and higher levels of care for, families dealing with Alzheimer's is both more cost-effective and also more ethical, and therefore ultimately better for all.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Respectfully,



Dr. Karen B. Friend
Brown University/Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation