



March 19, 2026

House Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House

Re: **Testimony SUPPORTING House Bill 7542**, to create the position of dementia services coordinator within the Department of Health.

Dear Chair Donovan and Honorable Committee Members,

ABC-RI stands for the rights and interests of Rhode Islanders residing in long-term care facilities, more than 40% of whom are living with some level of dementia. We strongly support **HB 7542** because Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are a serious public health crisis that requires a dedicated, coordinated response.

With the number of people living with dementia in Rhode Island ever increasing, it is crucial that our Department of Health have a coordinated approach to addressing the myriad challenges of living with dementia and caring for those living with dementia. The current ADRD Program has been highly effective and has accomplished a great deal, but the program is funded by a now-precarious federal grant, the requirements of which have demanded a large share of the coordinator's time and energy. The program has not had sufficient resources to:

- Fully oversee the implementation of the Rhode Island Alzheimer's disease and related disorder state plan;
- Assess and analyze dementia-related data collected by the state;
- Evaluate state-funded dementia services;
- Identify and support the provision of dementia-specific training programs;
- Coordinate with agencies, providers, and organizations within the state in order to meet the needs of those affected by dementia and prevent the duplication of services and initiatives;
- Recommend strategies to improve coordination of dementia-related services and resources provided by public and private entities;

We believe that a Dementia Services Coordinator will help **ensure that dementia care training in Rhode Island is accessible, effective, and evidence-based; that licensed professional dementia care is better aligned with evidence-based best practices, and that informal and family caregivers are better supported so that licensed professional care is necessary less often.** H7542 will make this possible, and we strongly urge the committee to support passage of this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Gerard,
ABC-RI