

TO: Chair Murray and members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee
FROM: Caleb Paredes Schultz
RE: Support: S 2874 – Dementia Services Coordinator
DATE: March 12, 2026

Chair Murray and honorable members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee:

My name is Caleb Paredes Schultz. I live in Providence, Rhode Island, attending college at Brown University, and am originally from Barrington. I am writing to urge you to support S 2874, introduced by Senator DiPalma, which would create a full-time, permanent Dementia Services Coordinator position within the Rhode Island Department of Health. This bill is a critical step in addressing the growing Alzheimer's and dementia crisis facing our state and the families who are living it every day.

My grandfather has lived with Alzheimer's for ten years. I have cared for him just as many in my family have — helping him eat, dress, and travel to get groceries. I've seen firsthand how challenging it is for a family to provide that care day after day. One experience that stays with me is when our family tried to find a home nurse to visit my grandfather regularly. It was time-consuming and painstaking — searching through individual sites, submitting requests, making call after call to screen candidates, ensuring they would be a good fit for my grandfather's specific needs, and then going through trial periods with him to see how he responded. We went through multiple nurses before finding the right person. It was an exhausting process, and we were navigating it largely on our own.

That experience made clear to me that Rhode Island families should not have to figure this out in isolation, and it is part of what drove me to pursue Alzheimer's research at Brown University. Through that work, I have spoken with many others across Rhode Island who share similar experiences, all struggling to find coordinated, accessible care for their loved ones.

The need for this position is urgent. There are 24,000 Rhode Islanders currently living with Alzheimer's — 11.4% of all Rhode Islanders over 65. An estimated 37,000 caregivers provide 52 million hours of unpaid care each year. And yet, Rhode Island is one of only 5 states that has never appropriated any funding to address Alzheimer's and dementia. We are falling behind. Medicaid costs for Rhode Islanders with Alzheimer's already total \$613 million, and per capita Medicare spending reached \$31,741 in 2023. Without coordinated action, these costs will only grow.

The Dementia Services Coordinator created by S 2874 would provide the dedicated leadership our state desperately needs. Specifically, this coordinator would:

- Oversee implementation of Rhode Island's Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders State Plan
- Coordinate across state agencies to reduce duplication and fill service gaps
- Identify grant opportunities to expand services for people living with dementia and their caregivers
- Increase awareness and access to quality, coordinated dementia care

This approach works. Currently, 33 states have a state-funded Dementia Services Coordinator. Those states have seen better coordination across agencies, more effective use of existing resources, enhanced ability to secure federal funding, and successful implementation of their Alzheimer's state plans.

I urge you to pass S 2874 out of committee and to the Senate floor with a recommendation for passage.

Sincerely,

Caleb Paredes Schultz