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My name is Darryll Rudy, and I'm here to share why Vermont needs a State Dementia Coordinator. Like more than 13,000 other Vermonters over the age of 65, I have Alzheimer's.

I live in St. Johnsbury with my partner, Barb. I want to spend the rest of my life there, with Barb, in our home. This choice is the most cost effective for us AND for the state.

In Vermont there are over 26,000 unpaid dementia family caregivers like Barb. All of them are working to navigate a disease that is long, complex and terminal. Many of them are also working and taking care of kids or other family members. They need help.

Vermont has amazing organizations and people doing the best they can to meet our needs, but this system is often fragmented and – even in little Vermont – there is a lot of variance depending on where you live.

There are so many different pieces that must be juggled by those of us dealing with this disease and this places an unbearable burden on our families.

I'm asking that Vermont make an investment in families like mine by establishing a State Dementia Coordinator – a point person to ensure access is available and equitable across our state.

A Dementia Coordinator will provide Vermont's doctors, service organizations and unpaid caregivers with the resources and structure they desperately need to cope with dementia in the most efficient and cost-effective way. Thank you.