

Hello. I'm Barb Edelman from St. Johnsbury, where I live with my partner, Darryll, who has Alzheimer's.

Thank you for this opportunity to urge you to allocate \$500,000 to the Dementia Respite Grant – a relatively modest investment for a big return.

Many participants in the two caregiver support groups I attend are caring for people further into the disease than Darryll, so I see what's down the road for me. I see the exhaustion. I see the mental and physical deterioration – of the *caregivers*, I mean.

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's eventually becomes a 24/7 job that can last for *years*. At some point, it's no longer possible to leave the person at home alone. So, tending to one's own needs – getting to doctor's appointments, getting regular exercise – becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible, without outside help. Respite care is essential for their well-being.

Vermont's dementia family caregivers provided over 28 million hours of unpaid care in 2022. Keeping them healthy by providing meaningful respite help is cost effective for the state.

In 2014, a \$2,000 annual cap was set for caregivers receiving this grant. This does not afford a meaningful amount of respite in 2024. While I don't need respite help yet, many of my fellow support group members do... some quite desperately. A grant that could provide them with \$75/week (or \$3900/year) would enable them to continue to keep their loved ones at home while ensuring their own health doesn't suffer.

Please increase the allocation for the Dementia Respite Grant to \$500,000 – it is a relatively small – but very effective – step Vermont can take to ensure its 20,000+ (and growing!) unpaid dementia family caregivers can continue in their vital roles.

Thank you.

