

March 27, 2018

Senate Health & Welfare Committee:

I am writing to ask for an amendment to H. 608 (Older Vermonters Act working group), specifically in regards to the inclusion of a new member to the working group – the Executive Director of the Vermont Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association or designee. The reasoning for the inclusion of the Executive Director of the Alzheimer’s Association (the Chair and author of the 2017 Governor’s Commission on Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders) is multifaceted and spelled out through the language and purpose of H. 608. Adding an expert in the realm of Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) to the work group is imperative to truly meet the objectives and the purpose stated in H. 608.

The Executive Director of the Alzheimer’s Association will provide comprehensive insight into the present statewide impact of ADRD (\$106 million in costs to Medicare and Medicaid in Vermont in 2018), the state of current care and support for elders – specifically those with ADRD (13,000 in 2018) and their care partners (30,000 in 2018 – whom provided 34,000,000 hours of unpaid care at a value of \$430,000,000 for this care with an estimated increase in higher health costs for care partners at \$27,000,000), and provide the work group vital insight about best practices, resources, and options for all Vermonters connected to ADRD. With the current state of ADRD (Alzheimer’s is the only leading cause of death in the United States and Vermont that cannot be prevented, cured, or even slowed) its projected trends in Vermont over the next 7 years (30% increase in the number of those with the disease – up to 17,000 in 2025, 36% increase in costs to Medicare and Medicaid – \$141 million in 2025) and our ageing population, any recommendations put forth by the Older Vermonters Act working group without DIRECT input throughout the entire process from the Executive Director at the Alzheimer’s Association will fall short of its goals and ultimately the needs of ALL Vermonters, not just older Vermonters.

I am advocating for a seat at the table. I am not a lobbyist for the Alzheimer’s Association (a 501(C)(3) Voluntary Health Organization). A seat at the table will not provide my family or I any financial gain. I am advocating because my Mother would do the same. However, she cannot – Alzheimer’s Disease has taken that ability away. I am a millennial. I call this place home and I want to grow old here. I will admit that that the ADRD numbers and their projections seem like an overwhelming challenge for the state. However, with every great challenge rises a great opportunity. Vermont is old and getting older. However, proactive steps now – taken by the Older Vermonters working group – in light of these numbers and the aforementioned statement, can change the trajectory of this challenge into this opportunity:

Vermont is old, however, it is the state that you want to grow old in.

State level programs, services and Best Practice that support the ADRD community, support the entire Vermont populous. Best ADRD practice is best practice. So, a seat at the table for the Executive Director of the Alzheimer’s Association will only enhance the efficacy of the Older Vermonters working group and ultimately the quality of life for Vermonters, as we all grow old.

Thank you for your time, service and consideration. Please see Attachments (2017 ADRD Annual Report, 2018 Vermont Alzheimer’s Facts & Figures) for more detailed information regarding H. 608 and reasoning’s for inclusion of the Executive Director of the Alzheimer’s Association or designee.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Rob Backlund

Only Child of Mother with late stages of Early Onset Alzheimer’s Disease