

Senate Health & Welfare Committee
Alzheimer's Awareness Day – April 6, 2023

Testimony – Darryll Rudy, Patient, Alzheimer's Association, Vermont Chapter

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 – and probably *many* more who won't be diagnosed, I have dementia – Alzheimer's in my case – and I will die of this disease.

I want to spend the rest of my life with my partner, Barb, living together in our St. Johnsbury home. Not only would this choice fill my deepest, heartfelt desire, it also is the most cost effective for us AND for the state.

In Vermont there currently 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 also have jobs and are 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's 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 you keep the funding for a State Dementia Coordinator in the FY24 House budget so that people like Barb and me have 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.