

**TESTIMONY**  
**LOUISE HITCHCOCK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION, SOUTH CENTRAL PA CHAPTER**  
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As Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association, South Central PA Chapter, I commend Representative Caltagirone for introducing legislation to mandate training on disabilities for law enforcement officers. There is a real need for law enforcement officers to understand the needs of the people with disabilities including the 390,000 individuals dealing with Alzheimer's disease in Pennsylvania. These individuals and their families depend on police officers who are knowledgeable about the disease to help them with crisis situations. If insensitive and unknowledgeable about the disease, the officer may inadvertently allow a situation to escalate into a catastrophic reaction.

While an individual with Alzheimer's disease is as likely as any other individual to be involved in any situation, a number of behaviors common to AD individuals increase the likelihood of specific problems occurring. Wandering, inappropriate sexual behavior, the appearance of intoxication, and shoplifting are common situations involving individuals with Alzheimer's disease that law enforcement officers will encounter.

At some point in the disease process over 59% of people with Alzheimer's disease wander and get lost. When an individual with Alzheimer's disease gets lost, he behaves differently than the general population. He will not cry out for help or respond to help. He will leave few physical clues behind. He will often be found a short distance from where he disappeared, a short distance from the road or open field, usually in a creek or drainage area, and/or caught in briars and bushes. A person with Alzheimer's disease can get lost two blocks from his house or even in his front yard. If he is not found in 24 hours there is a 46% chance that he will die.

Recently, we experienced a situation that illustrates the need for mandated law enforcement training on Alzheimer's disease. On a Saturday I received a call from our national, 24 hour toll-free hotline that serves to identify and relocate individuals with Alzheimer's disease who are lost and wander. They informed me that Mr. M., an 86 year old local Pennsylvania man with Alzheimer's disease, had wandered from his home and was lost. He had been agitated earlier that morning and walked about 10 miles to a post office where someone contacted the police. The police called his wife, who is unable to drive. She asked the police drive him home.

The report from the national hotline stated what happened next. "The police were very unhelpful in terms of understanding how important it was to get him back to his home (they initially said he should walk the ten miles home) and later decided to drop him off, but only within two blocks from his house. They did not tell his wife where he would be dropped off. Fortunately this story ended happily, however, what could have happened is that he became lost two blocks from his house. Because of the cold, sleet,

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and snow on the day he wandered, this man could easily have died as a result from exposure.

A positive aspect of this Bill is that it brings in the expertise of staff from disability organizations who are well versed in their disabilities. The Bill incorporates educational materials developed by National disability organizations. It incorporates inservice training on disabilities for officers who have already gone through cadet training and have not received training on disabilities. Over the years, our information about disabilities has evolved and expanded. The inservice provides up-to-date, state-of-the-art information on disabilities to law enforcement officers.

The Alzheimer's Association Chapters of Pennsylvania support this Bill and believe that trained law enforcement officers will be empowered to effectively help families who are dealing with this dreaded disease.