

House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee
Informational Hearing on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Legislation

Secretary Kavulich, Department of Aging

June 10th, 2024

Good morning everyone, it is a pleasure to be here with Chairwoman Madden, Chairman Mentzer, members of the House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee and our valued partners at the Alzheimer's Association. I am pleased to have this opportunity to be part of a great collective call, one that has been sounding for many months and years: to do better by the needs of the growing population of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their caregivers.

Just a little over a week ago, my team and I were proud to join Governor Shapiro and legislative and community partners to launch the Aging Our Way PA strategic plan for older adults. During the development of this plan, engaging with thousands of Pennsylvanians through hundreds of meetings in every one of our 67 counties, we heard loud and clear the needs of the Alzheimer's community. For too long, caregivers and their loved ones with dementia have been a largely invisible community. They need to be seen and heard, and they deserve a coordinated commitment in state government to do so.

This is why the Shapiro Administration, and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging are seeking \$1.9 million to establish an Alzheimer's, Dementia and Related Disorders infrastructure within our state governance, at the Department of Aging. I am here today to add the Department's voice to this request, and to emphasize our commitment to working with all of you to get this over the finish line.

As we know, this is a disease that touches millions of Pennsylvanians in life-changing ways:

- In 2020, there were 280,000 Pennsylvanians living with Alzheimer's disease and that number is projected to increase to 320,000 by 2025.
- In 2022, there were 404,000 caregivers providing 646 million total hours of unpaid care, a value of well over \$10.7 billion.

Pennsylvania needs to do better in supporting these adults and their caregivers. And our advocacy partners, sister agencies, local governments and community partners all need a dedicated structure within state government where we can collaborate and collectively strengthen and focus our efforts toward meeting their needs.

Currently, no state agency has full programmatic oversight over Alzheimer's Disease and related Disorders and while the Department has led some efforts, such as the creation of the State Plan for ADRD and our annual ADRD Forum, we currently do not have resources to fully engage in this important work, even though there has been such a significant increase in the number of adults and caregivers impacted. This new office will align the work the Department is already doing in this space with other Aging programs and services such as the PA Link to Aging and Disability Resources, our PACE prescription drug program, and Caregiver Support programs, that will together allow the Department to better support this growing population and their caregivers in their communities. Certainly, this will also be done in collaboration with the Department of Health, as a partner agency.

The Department will leverage these dedicated resources to develop related materials and provide education and outreach, referrals, and supports to individuals with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders and their families, their caregivers, aging professionals and the general public, to provide the best opportunities we can for impacted individuals to live safely in their communities. The Department will continue its collaborations with the National Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers located at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Pennsylvania to educate medical professionals, stakeholders and the general public on ADRD.

The Department is supportive of legislation, which would align with the Governor's budget proposal in establishing an office in the Department of Aging and the creation of an Alzheimer's, Dementia and Related Disorders Advisory Committee to guide its work. The Advisory Committee will help bring all of the necessary partners and stakeholders to the table and guide the department on the implementation and updates to the Alzheimer's state plan. We will collaborate closely with our sister agencies, the Department of Health, and Department of Human Services, on all of our activities moving forward, as both agencies are set to be members of the advisory committee, with the Acting Secretary of Health as its Co-Chair.

We are committed to working with all of you to make this proposal in state government a reality, as we work to create a Commonwealth where every Pennsylvanian can age with joy, support, connection and dignity.

Thank you.