



March 12, 2014

Senate Committee on Labor and Judiciary--AB 710

Rob Gundermann, Public Policy Director Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin.

Good afternoon,

I thank you for holding this hearing today on an important issue that has the potential to impact all of us. There are a number of reasons why we are dealing with an increased number of people with dementia becoming lost. One reason is that Wisconsin is growing older. DHS was kind enough to provide some maps that show how our population will age in the coming decades and I've attached those to my testimony. Another reason is that modern medicine is prolonging our lives and the most common form of dementia, Alzheimer's disease, is largely a disease of age. The longer you live the greater the likelihood of developing Alzheimer's disease. In fact almost half of those 85 years and older have Alzheimer's type dementia. As our population lives longer we will see more people living with Alzheimer's. Unfortunately, while we have made great strides in prolonging life, we haven't developed any new medications to treat Alzheimer's disease in over a decade and we have no medications that will prevent or even delay the progression of the disease. At this point in time all we can do is address symptoms. Wisconsin, like many states, has also expanded the length of time between license renewals to eight years. Coincidentally eight years is the average length of time an individual lives with Alzheimer's. Lastly, we have in some respects become a victim of our own success in that Wisconsin does a very good job of allowing people with Alzheimer's disease to remain in their homes for as long as possible. This is a win-win situation as the vast majority of people with dementia want to live at home and at the same time we save an enormous amount of money in our Medicaid budget by preventing needless institutionalizations but the net result of all these factors is that we have more older people with dementia on the road and the numbers will only increase with time.

Inevitably we will have people with dementia on occasion become lost. The bill before you today addresses this issue. It provides a better mechanism for dealing with these situations. Statistically if we don't find the person within 24 hours the probability of a positive outcome drops to single digits. Essentially we are in a race against dehydration and exposure as those are the two factors that most often cause negative outcomes. In Wisconsin where we experience severe weather the time frame is often less than 24 hours. Assembly Bill 710 will help address these situations quickly by getting the word out far and wide.

In closing I would just like to mention something a police officer from Ashwaubenon said to me several years ago. He said that every time he has responded to a report of someone driving the

Main Office
517 North Segoe Road, Suite 301
Madison, WI 53705
608.232.3400
608.232.3407 fax
888.308.6251 toll-free

Grant/Richland Regional Office
8820 Hwy 35/61 S
Lancaster, WI 53813
608.723.4288
608.723.6122 fax
888.308.6251 toll-free

Columbia/Sauk Regional Office
2825 Hunters Trail
Portage, WI 53901
608.742.9055
608.745.3940 fax
888.308.6251 toll-free

Proud Member of
**Community
Health Charities**
WORKING FOR A HEALTHY WISCONSIN
support@alzwiss.org
www.alzwiss.org



wrong way on the interstate the person was either intoxicated or had dementia. Driving the wrong way or forgetting what a stop sign or a stop light means are typical mistakes someone with dementia makes when they get confused. When a person with dementia is driving and gets lost and confused it's in everyone's best interest to find them quickly. This bill will not only help people with dementia to get home safely, it will help everyone sharing the roads with them get home safely too.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to try to answer any questions.

Main Office
517 North Segoe Road, Suite 301
Madison, WI 53705
608.232.3400
608.232.3407 fax
888.308.6251 toll-free

Grant/Richland Regional Office
8820 Hwy 35/61 S
Lancaster, WI 53813
608.723.4288
608.723.6122 fax
888.308.6251 toll-free

Columbia/Sauk Regional Office
2825 Hunters Trail
Portage, WI 53901
608.742.9055
608.745.3940 fax
888.308.6251 toll-free

Proud Member of

WORKING FOR A HEALTHY WISCONSIN
support@alzisc.org
www.alzisc.org