

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am Laurie Glover from Great Falls. I am a Family Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Educator, and Baby Boomer aged child of two living parents. I speak in support of the five legislative bills the ADRD Work Group brings forth.

I have provided nursing care to residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities. I also conducted home assessments of people who needed assistance in their activities of daily living. For those people who are able to be cared for in assisted living facilities or their own homes, the care can be much more home-like and less institutionalized than in a nursing home. More people who have dementias should be allowed to live in assisted living facilities, with expansion of the Medicaid Waiver home based services and reimbursements to Assisted Living facilities. I have seen it myself, with my own parents, who at varying times had both home based services and assisted living. The family was able to stay involved, we had our privacy as a family, yet we received support for the care of our loved ones.

I know from personal and professional experience that families, who care for their loved one who has dementia, need respite and support services. These caregivers often become ill, themselves, from the stress. When they become ill, it is an added cost to the state, when they cannot care for their loved one. The strains and stressors of caring for a loved one with dementia and associated health conditions are great. These family members need support to be able to maintain their own health, provide safe care for their loved ones, and continue to be productive citizens. Funding for in-home support services, and training and education are greatly needed. Also, training for the subsystems in our communities that are first responders, the police, EMS; and adequate pay and benefits for the personal care attendants and nursing staff who support the patients and families are essential.

Some of our older citizens do not have family or loved ones to advocate for them in their times of greatest need. I saw this as a volunteer Nurse Practitioner at a homeless shelter. A guardianship program that provides standards and accountability, and funding to establish appointed guardianships for indigent people, is very much needed in our state.

Thank you for your service on this committee and in your legislative roles. I urge you to do what you can to support these bills in preparation for our aging Montana population, our deserving seniors, families and their communities.

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