

MARCH 29, 2013

SENATOR BATES:

I AM UNABLE TO ATTEND THE HEARING ON MONDAY AFTERNOON FOR HB-5024-- THE BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN. (I LEARNED THE DATE THAT IT IS TO BE HELD TWO DAYS AGO.) IF POSSIBLE, COULD YOU, AS CO-CHAIR OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, HAVE AN APPROPRIATE STAFFPERSON SEE THAT THE REST OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE RECEIVES A COPY OF MY ATTACHED TESTIMONY? (I DO NOT HAVE THEIR E-MAIL ADDRESSES.) IF SO, I WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATIVE!



MAY D. DASCH

March 28, 2013

TO: Subcommittee on Human Services, of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Co-Chairs: Senator Alan Bates & Representative Nancy Nathanson
Members: Senators Elizabeth S. Hayward & Jackie Winters;
Representatives Tim Freeman & Joe Gallegos

FROM: May D. Dasch (P.O. Box 1116, Philomath, Oregon 97370)

SUBJECT: HB-5024 Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Budget

My mother died in the mid-1980's, after a seventeen-year battle with Alzheimer's disease. When she no longer was able to live independently, my brother and I moved her from the East Coast to Oregon. She spent the last nine years of her life in a mid-valley nursing home, her mind clouded by severe dementia and several small strokes. I was her advocate throughout that time, trying to see that she received adequate and humane care. I, and the other family members who had residents in the facility, were not conversant with federal and Oregon long-term care law. Individually, we expressed our concerns to staff when significant caregiving problems arose, always fearful though that our legitimate complaints (even in that established facility) might result in some subtle form of retaliation.

Unfortunately for my mother, the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OLTCO) and the national Alzheimer's Association came into existence only a few years before her death. Thus, she never benefited from the professional expertise of either. Realizing the ever present need for families to have access to outside help, I subsequently became a volunteer: for the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (Recruitment & Screening Committee member); for the Corvallis-based Marys Peak Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association (Board member), until it and several other chapter offices were closed in a consolidation effort; and later, for the Salem-based Alzheimer's Network of Oregon (Board member). Both nonprofit Alzheimer's organizations are very supportive of the advocacy role of the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

Then and Now... the contrast is stark! Then-- we as family members were completely on our own in pressing facilities for adequate care. Now, family members of residents can obtain outside help from professional staff and well-trained local volunteers, when care needs are not being met. At the same time though, Alzheimer's disease is reaching epidemic proportions in the elderly population, with the cause, prevention, and a cure for this irreversible disease as yet unknown. An estimated seventy percent of facility residents are afflicted with dementia, usually Alzheimer's. Those individuals, frequently without nearby family, are unable to speak up for themselves, and must rely on outsiders to ensure that they receive humane and appropriate treatment. Unfortunately, some facilities-- particularly assisted living facilities and some adult foster care homes-- admit persons with Alzheimer's disease, when they do not have adequately trained staff to provide acceptable dementia care for those residents, some with behavioral problems.

More than ever, the active presence of the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman in monitoring Oregon's long-term care facilities and addressing the many problems of resident care is essential. As a former family member, and a longtime volunteer on behalf of persons with Alzheimer's disease, I urge you to fund the agency as fully as possible during these difficult economic times. Thank you for considering my concerns.

May D. Dasch