

February 17th, 2014

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TO: Chairman Greenlick and the members of the House Committee on Health Care

RE: Testimony of Alzheimer's Association Oregon Chapter regarding Vulnerable Adult Missing Persons legislation in **SB 1577A** for to the House Committee on Health Care.

Chairman Greenlick and the members of the House Committee on Health Care, for the record, my name is Jon Bartholomew, and I am the Policy Director for the Alzheimer's Association Oregon Chapter. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. We provide education and support for people diagnosed, their families, and caregivers from offices in Portland, Bend, Medford and Eugene.

The number of people in Oregon with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia is growing. Currently there are about 80,000 Oregonians with Alzheimer's and that number is expected to climb to 110,000 by 2025. Alzheimer's is a devastating disease that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills and, eventually even the ability to carry out the simplest tasks of daily living. Currently, there is no known cure, way to prevent, or even slow the progression of Alzheimer's.

Sixty percent of people with Alzheimer's will wander from their home. Sixty percent of Alzheimer's patients who wander, if not found within 24 hours, will suffer severe injury or death. Eighty percent if not found within 72 hours will die. A person with Alzheimer's may not remember his or her name or address, and can become disoriented, even in familiar places. Too many times, we have heard the sad story of someone who left home, only to succumb to the elements just a few miles from home.

We want to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable citizens. The Alzheimer's Association has the Medic Alert Safe Return Program. We also provide information to the public about how to keep their loved on safe. And we support safety standards in long term care settings where people with dementia reside. However, wandering will remain to be a problem.

Law enforcement is frequently called on to respond to a wandering case. Many police and sheriff departments are well trained on what to do when

they receive a report on a missing person with dementia. However, not all have formal policies or training. That is what this bill addresses.

SB 1577A will require all police and sheriff departments in Oregon to adopt a formal policy by January of 2015 on how to respond to a case of a missing vulnerable adult. This policy should include:

- 1) Description of the training officers will receive
- 2) Requirements for accepting missing persons reports
- 3) Protocols on involving the local media to have the public assist with a search
- 4) Protocols for coordinating with other agencies
- 5) Protocols for conducting a search for a vulnerable adult

The Oregon Accreditation Alliance will craft a template policy that departments can adopt, or departments can adopt a policy they create from scratch or one adapted from the Alliance template. The Alliance is a body that exists to improve the quality of law enforcement agencies in the State of Oregon and ultimately the quality of services provided to the citizens of this state. The Alliance mutually supports and endorses the continued improvement of law enforcement and emergency communications services by establishing professional standards of accountability, management, and operations.

If a department already has a formal policy that addresses the bill's requirements, then this legislation does not affect them. The legislation allows for flexibility and discretion for each department to determine what works best in their situation.

Oregon will be seeing more wandering cases, and this legislation will ensure an efficient and effective response to keep our most vulnerable citizens safe.