



TESTIMONY OF REP. DIANNE HESSELBEIN, DISTRICT 79

AB 784, COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

JANUARY 25, 2016, ROOM 413 NORTH

Mr. Chairman and members, thank you for this opportunity to testify.

As Vice Chair of the Speaker's Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia, I am excited to see this important package of bipartisan bills receive such prompt attention.

Our Chairman, Rep. Rohrkaste, and the rest of the task force members are calling this initiative Wisconsin Cares. It is not just a slogan. The bills before you were developed after we traveled hundreds of miles and heard hours of testimony in every corner of the state.

Each piece of legislation will meet a real need – the kinds of needs that were expressed to us at our hearings, often tearfully, by the caregivers and families of patients who have Alzheimer's or dementia. The bills will provide support, protection, and the promise of prevention and possible treatments through research.

Research is the topic of my bill, AB 784, to provide \$50,000 to fund two new studies at the UW-Madison's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. The studies will analyze blood samples from adult, middle-aged children of people who have had Alzheimer's – children, in fact, like me. The UW researchers believe that if they are able to identify new abnormal proteins in the blood, they may be on the road to developing new treatments and approaches to prevention. These initial studies may result in larger grants to pursue this line of inquiry from the National Institutes of Health.

Chancellor Rebecca Blank sent me the following message:

“Every day at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the best and brightest engage in research to help improve the lives of Wisconsin's citizens. We know Alzheimer's disease and dementia impact the lives of many people in the state, from patients to caregivers and their families. Research is crucial to finding treatments and cures. We are grateful to the Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia for its proposal to increase funding for these diseases in Wisconsin.”

Mr. Chairman, I ask that this committee give AB 784 and all of the Wisconsin Cares legislation unanimous support, and although I'm happy to answer any questions.