

March 3rd, 2021

Mister Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Linsey Hillmer and I am from Alexandria, Minnesota. I grew up with my grandmother, Betty, who had Alzheimer's.

- My family did not have a history of anyone having any form of dementia or Alzheimer's. Betty was a widow and lived alone for 20 years. She was very active in bowling, gardening, art, and working.
- When Betty started forgetting appointments or birthdays, we assumed it was the normal part of the aging process. We figured that she's very independent, stubborn and kept very busy schedule.
- When Betty's undiagnosed Alzheimer's progressed where we feared for her safety, we sought out answers as a family. My dad grew up only ever hearing of people being senile but no one in our group of neighbors, friends or family had ever had to deal with something like this.
- Had we known how to recognize the signs of Alzheimer's and how it differs from the normal aging process, my grandma and my family would have been better prepared.
- It wasn't until Betty was in a full care Alzheimer's unit at the Glenwood, MN nursing home that we really started to understand this disease. Betty fought this disease for 20+ years.
- I share this story with you because I was robbed of my grandmother for nearly 20 years by Alzheimer's disease. Time where I should have been sharing my love of antiques, thrifting, painting, gardening, etc. All the things that my grandma loved. Instead, I had to learn empathy, patience, understanding. I had to learn how to comfort my crying grandmother when she'd tell me the other kids were being mean to her or that she failed a test in school. I had to believe, for her sake, that the stuffed animals in her room were real. I had to watch my grandmother reverse roles with me.

That's why the Alzheimer's Association is working to pass House File 313, which would provide funds to the Minnesota Department of Health to establish a public awareness campaign around dementia and Alzheimer's disease and the importance of early detection and diagnosis.

Please support House File 313 to help provide awareness of the signs of dementia, to help reduce stigma of the disease, and to encourage Minnesotans to have conversations about cognitive health with their health care providers.

Thank you,
Linsey Hillmer