



alzheimer's  association®  
new hampshire chapter

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Public Forum Held on a Dual Crisis in Long-Term Care: Alzheimer's Disease and the Shortage of Direct-Care Workers**

*A round-table discussion about how the lack of health coverage for direct-care workers affects this critical workforce, and, in turn, the individuals and families living with Alzheimer's Disease in New Hampshire and the United States*

Concord — Wednesday morning at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord, six panelists representing various sectors of the long-term care industry presented a candid conversation to an audience of concerned local citizens. Sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association and the PHI Health Care for Health Care Workers initiative, the presentation and discussion focused on growing crisis in the long-term care industry: There are not enough direct-care workers (Licensed Nursing Assistants, Home Health Aides, Personal Care Service Providers) entering — and remaining in— the direct-care workforce to meet the increasing demand from long-term care consumers.

These consumers include a growing number of elders living with Alzheimer's disease and other age-related dementias, where the training, skills, consistency, and compassion of the caregiver are particularly important. "We have a lot of services for cancer, heart patients etc., but do we have a lot of services for 5 million Alzheimer's patients in this country? My health and long term care depend on what our elected officials do to make sure we have access to quality care and good caregivers," said Ted Cutler, who was diagnosed four years ago with the disease.

The number of people with Alzheimer's is projected to grow significantly in the coming decades, as the more than 78 million "baby boomers" reach the age of highest risk. "We're very worried," said Susan Antkowiak a panelist and Project Director at the Alzheimer's Association – NH. "With a rapidly aging population in New Hampshire, and the number of those living with cognitive impairment on the rise, the need for a strong direct-care workforce is more crucial than ever before."

"This is indeed a crisis," said Allison Lee, a panelist and National Campaign Manager for the Health Care for Health Care Workers campaign. "There is a growing body of research showing

that health coverage and other benefits, such as paid time off, are even more important than wages in reducing turnover and increasing the supply of direct-care workers.”

“Low pay, insufficient training and support, and lack of health insurance coverage force many workers to leave work they love for less meaningful jobs that offer better pay and benefits,” Lee continued. “If we truly want to ensure health care choices — for ourselves and for our loved ones — in the future, we need to begin caring about our caregivers *today*. A first step is to provide access to affordable health insurance coverage.”

Workers and employers voiced their concern as well. “One of the most important things for a person living with Alzheimer’s is to have consistent and reliable care,” said Donna Maloney, the Human Resources Director of the Edgewood Centre, a long-term care facility in Portsmouth. “As an employer, being able to provide a basic necessity like affordable health coverage is critical to keeping good workers. It’s just wrong that workers don’t have access to the care they provide.”

“Doctors and nurses have health coverage,” said Jennifer Craigue, an LNA and President of the NH Direct Care Worker Association, “but we don’t even though we provide 80 percent of the hands on care. Why can’t direct-care workers have it too?”

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**Panelists (all are available for follow-up interviews by the press):**

Jennifer Craigue, LNA, President of the Direct Care Worker Association

Donna Maloney, Human Resources Director, The Edgewood Centre

Allison Lee, National Campaign Manager, PHI Health Care for Health Care Workers campaign

Susan Antkowiak, Project Director, Alzheimer’s Association – New Hampshire

Ted and Harriet Cutler, Ted was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s four years ago

Louise Rosand, The Caregiver Network

Moderator: Annie Farnsworth, New Hampshire Women’s Lobby

**Support Materials available:**

- High-resolution images from the event
- Charts and graphs ready to place
- Other background material about Alzheimer’s disease, the direct-care worker crisis in New Hampshire (and the nation), and how health coverage (or lack of health coverage) affects the direct-care workforce, and those they care for.

**To arrange follow-up interviews and receive a complete press packet or photos call or e-mail:**

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