

Chair Carpenter and Members of the House Public Health Committee,

My name is Tiffany Naccarato, Doctor of Nursing Practice and lifelong Kansan, proudly serving rural Kansans as a nurse practitioner for the last 15 years. I am here today as a proponent of Senate Bill 88 – Requiring Dementia Training for the State Long Term Care Ombudsman’s Office. As I began my career in medicine, my mother was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s Disease. She was a mere 56 years old. My father selflessly cared for her at home until his own health began to decline, and ultimately, we lost him three years ago. You see, one way or another, Alzheimer’s Disease has robbed me of both of my parents.

As my family navigated the complexities of caregiving, we were faced with the harsh reality of limited resources and support. Ultimately, we made the difficult decision to transition my mother to a long-term care facility, where she has resided for the past three years. Despite the challenges, she is now thriving in a safe and supportive environment.

As a caregiver and a healthcare professional, I’ve witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of dementia on families and communities. That’s why I’m passionate about ensuring our long-term care facilities provide the highest quality care possible. The alarming reality is that over 65% of long-term care residents live with dementia, yet those advocating for their rights and well-being lack formal dementia training.

This bill isn't about creating new infrastructure or allocating additional funds; it's about doing the right thing. The training exists, and there's no fiscal note attached; so by supporting Senate Bill 88, we can raise the bar for care and compassion in our long-term care facilities.

As my father used to say, "It costs nothing to do the right thing." I urge you all to do just that – support Senate Bill 88. Let's stand together for my mother, for the tens of thousands of Kansans living with dementia, and for those yet to be diagnosed. Thank you for your time and attention.