

February 26, 2025

Health.Human.Services@house.ks.gov

Dear Chair Carpenter and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

I am testifying as a proponent of SB 88 - Requiring Dementia Training for the State Long Term Care Ombudsman's office.

Thank you for your time and consideration as I share a recent experience working with a family whose loved one was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease and residing in an assisted living memory care unit in Kansas. It highlighted the critical need for an ombudsperson to be trained in dementia care.

The resident was experiencing significant communication challenges that were not being adequately addressed by the staff despite several care planning sessions and meetings with the Director of Nursing. The family was frustrated and felt helpless as their loved one's health and well-being was at risk so we turned to the LTC ombudsperson for assistance.

While the ombudsperson was committed to advocating on behalf of the dementia resident, it became clear that a deeper understanding of dementia care—hence more confidence-- would have significantly improved their ability to assess the situation and provide meaningful recommendations to the staff. The ombudsperson struggled to interpret the resident's behaviors through the lens of dementia, missing key opportunities to suggest person-centered approaches that could have improved the resident's quality of life.

If the ombudsperson had been trained in dementia care, they could have played a more effective role in ensuring that the facility was implementing best practices. They could have also helped the family better understand the unique needs of their loved one and supported them with greater advocacy and empathy.

Dementia-specific training is not just beneficial, it is essential. This is especially true for the advocates who are expected to protect our vulnerable Kansans experiencing dementia. When our advocates are equipped with knowledge about person-centered care and best practices in dementia care, they can ensure that residents receive the dignified and compassionate care they deserve.

When a family or resident requires a Kansas Ombudsperson, they should feel confident their advocate is thoroughly prepared to understand the complexities of dementia care and will appropriately address the situation that leads to a solution.

I strongly urge your support for SB 88 and thank you for your time today.



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