

February 1, 2022

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Ariel Burger, and I have worked as a caregiver at several different memory care facilities over about two years. Thank you for the invitation to testify in support of SB 1556 and creating a certification and public registry for caregivers at memory care facilities and in other settings. I have never testified about legislation before, but I wanted to be here because this is an issue that matters a lot to me.

As a caregiver in memory care facilities and other settings, I care for vulnerable older adults with dementia. I love connecting with the residents as individuals. As a caregiver I always want to treat the residents the way I would want to be treated if I was experiencing dementia and needed to live in a facility.

However, I have also been very frustrated by the lack of training and by poor quality training that facilities have provided to me. One of the facilities I worked at did not have a dedicated trainer, so other caregivers trained me, although it was clear they were not interested in or skilled in that role. For my training the facility also told me to watch six hours of videos that seemed dated and hard to follow. No one checked in with me after my training to ensure that I felt comfortable and confident. Later on, it became clear that no one had trained me in how to use a gait belt when I did not know how to use this tool to move a resident. Luckily no one was injured, but this missed training requirement put me and the residents at risk. The facility then had to do a special training in how to use a gait belt. I am glad I eventually got this training, but it would have been much better if I'd received it at the beginning of my employment.

A certification and public registry would help to address these problems, and it would help me want to continue to work and build a career caring for people in need. A certification would help give me confidence that I've received required training, and I could list it on my resume to search for other caregiving jobs. I also think employers would take training requirements more seriously if there was a public registry. And, a registry would allow the families of the vulnerable residents I cared for to look up my history and confirm that I had been trained and background checked.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.