

## Testimony of Anne P. Hill in Support of SB 796

February 7, 2023

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and Members of the Senate on Health Care Committee,

Thank you for considering SB 796, which would establish the Oregon Memory Net.

My name is Anne P. Hill. My mother died of Alzheimer's disease in 2009. I was her family caregiver and we both had a very difficult journey with her disease. As a result, I have volunteered for the State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease for 13 years, first as a member, then as co-chair of several committees and on the leadership committee. I'm co-author with Dr. Marian Hodges (retired Medical Director of Providence Senior Health) of *Help is Here: When someone you love has Dementia*, a short, readable book for family members caring for a parent or spouse with dementia. (The *Help is Here* Project is a mission of Providence Foundation, which owns the copyrights to all four of the *Help is Here* books.) I've made scores of presentations across Oregon and in many other states to family groups, staff and residents at retirement residences and groups of medical professionals about what goes on in families when a family member has dementia.

When someone in the family has dementia, the first thing that the family needs are a diagnosis. Until the family member is diagnosed, the family doesn't understand why their family member is so different than they were, they cannot make plans to keep their family member safe nor plan for the future of the family. In the past 13 years at conferences and presentations around Oregon, I have talked with literally hundreds of family members, many of them weeping, who have been unable to find any medical professional *anywhere in this state* to diagnose what was wrong with their family member. The reasons for this are legion: many primary care providers don't know how or aren't comfortable making the diagnosis; in rural Oregon, some primary care providers are unwilling to diagnose their lifetime friends with a disease that carries such a stigma; getting an appointment with someone who is knowledgeable about dementia can take months, if the family is lucky enough to get one at all.

Oregon needs a more comprehensive approach for the disease that is the

sixth leading killer of Oregonians. SB 796 is a good start. Please support SB 796 to establish the Oregon Memory Net.

Sincerely yours,

Anne P. Hill, JD

Mac/cloud/spado/SB 796 Testimony