

Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

Kevin Condict 271-7875

SB 202, relative to Alzheimer's disease and other related dementia training for first responders.

Hearing Date: February 19, 2025

Time Opened: 9:45 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:02 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Pearl, McGough, Gannon and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Altschiller

Bill Analysis: This bill adds a member of emergency medical services to the subcommittee on Alzheimer's disease and adds a member of the Alzheimer's Association to the emergency medical and trauma services coordinating board.

Sponsors:
Sen. Prentiss

Who supports the bill: Sen. Suzanne Prentiss (SD 5), Meghan Wentworth (Alzheimer's Assoc.), Jenny Horgan (Alzheimer's Assoc.), Dawn McKinney (NHLA), Sarah McCarthy, Janet Lucas, Elizabeth Ham, Michelle Collins, Lucy Galeota, Maria Stephanou, Kathleen Harvard, Melissa Grenier, Judith Jones (New Futures), Leah Farley, Maureen Meletis, Kim Memmesheimer, and Kerry Dennis.

Who opposes the bill: None.

Who is neutral on the bill: None.

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator Suzanne Prentiss, Senate District 5

- Sen. Prentiss introduced Senate Bill 202.
- Sen. Prentiss said that there has been work done on this bill to get it to a place where it will make a difference in terms of raising awareness around Alzheimer's and how to better treat Alzheimer's patients.
- Sen. Prentiss said that when she had the original bill amended, the methodology was still present in the amended version.

- Sen. Prentiss explained that she was approached by the Alzheimer's Association to introduce legislation that would set a requirement of a minimum of one hour of education for emergency medical services (EMS) professionals. This educational requirement would be needed biannually to keep their certification.
- Sen. Prentiss said the question is whether this education would be required or not. She explained that several other states have passed similar legislation.
- Sen. Prentiss noted that there is already state infrastructure in New Hampshire. RSA 153-A sets standards regarding education and patient care. These protocols are developed by physicians and medical professionals.
- Sen. Prentiss said there is already a system wide coordinating board comprised of a variety of representatives from various walks of life in the state.
- Sen. Prentiss also added that New Hampshire is a state that uses the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians, and the State has deferred to them. The State has said that what the National Registry requires for recertification is good.
- Sen. Prentiss said that despite this the state does not take an official position on the certification, and instead continuously defers to the National Registry because it is efficient and meets national standards.
- Sen. Prentiss said that she wants to elevate this topic to the EMS community while utilizing the current system that is in place.
- Sen. Prentiss also proposed in SB 202 that there will be a seat added on the subcommittee for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that brings stakeholders together to address issues with Alzheimer's. This subcommittee is meant to help educate, raise awareness, and to take care of any problems that may occur.
- Sen. Prentiss explained that she brought forward a proposal to amend RSA 153-A and RSA 126-A.
- Sen. Prentiss said that RSA 126-A:15-a established the Alzheimer's disease subcommittee, and her amendment would add a seat on that subcommittee for an emergency service professional along with law enforcement members.
- Sen. Prentiss spoke on the bill's parameters. She said there should be no current requirements for EMS education besides the national standard. She said that New Hampshire already has the infrastructure to accomplish what is required, and an EMS professional should be placed on the Department of Health and Human Services subcommittee.
- Sen. Prentiss said that her plan to move forward is to use the infrastructure that is already in place. She said that she and Jenny Horgan will be meeting with the EMS Medical Control Board.

- Sen. Prentiss explained that the goal of this meeting is the development of a medical operational protocol that would be implemented within the next two years.
- Sen. Prentiss said that any time there is a new protocol, there is an educational component that accompanies it.
- Sen. Prentiss summarized her points: putting infrastructure in place, following national standards, and a pathway to elevate the education around Alzheimer's disease within the EMS community.

Jenny Horgan, Alzheimer's Association

- Ms. Horgan said that Alzheimer's is a serious issue to raise awareness about. She stated that in New Hampshire 26,500 individuals live with Alzheimer's. This number represents ten percent of the senior citizen population in New Hampshire.
- Ms. Horgan listed some components of the disease, including difficulty remembering and a confused or agitated state of mind. This can sometimes lead to aggressive behaviors.
- Ms. Horgan said that EMS personnel interact with Alzheimer's patients in a variety of situations, including hospital transportation or in certain disaster situations.
- Ms. Horgan said that the intention of this bill is to create more communication and collaboration through the subcommittee and the Medical Control Board to raise awareness about the available tools and education available to EMS professionals.

Meghan Wentworth, Alzheimer's Association

- Ms. Wentworth expressed her support for SB 202.
- Ms. Wentworth said that for the last ten years of her career, she has worked as a director in various assisted living communities with specifically focused memory care units.
- Ms. Wentworth stated that Alzheimer's care is her passion, and that she has been lucky enough to have received a lot of training throughout her career. This has resulted in not only certifications and licensure, but also a greater knowledge of the disease.
- Ms. Wentworth explained the variety of behaviors she experiences from day to day, including being mistaken for a family member, verbal slurs, and irrational and aggressive behaviors.

- Ms. Wentworth said that at these moments, she is thankful for her training, which allows her to de-escalate these situations without the use of pharmacological interventions.
- Ms. Wentworth said that medical emergencies can exacerbate the situation, and EMS professionals on duty in her unit are a necessity.
- Ms. Wentworth stated that it is the goal of all involved to not just treat the individual in a timely and effective manner, but also to treat them with respect and dignity.
- Ms. Wentworth said that unfortunately, with a lack of training, these interactions don't always go as smoothly as they should.
- Ms. Wentworth said that without a solid knowledge base, she has heard EMS personnel correct a resident on what the actual year is, tell them that the mother they are asking for has passed away, and that the five-year-old daughter they are looking for is now an adult.
- Ms. Wentworth said that because of these instances, it is vital that collaborations are increased with partners in the EMS community so that it can be ensured that these already vulnerable people are not exposed to more instances of unnecessary stress.
- Senator Pearl thanked Ms. Wentworth for the work she does. He said that his wife has also worked in dementia care. He said that he understands the stressful nature of the job and appreciates this line of work.