

Thank you to Representative Wakeman and the Families, Children, and Seniors committee for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Douglas Hammond and I currently reside in Birch Run, MI. I am here today to discuss my experiences with Alzheimer's and other related dementias. 20 years ago when I was still in high school at Frankenmuth High School my Mother (Karen Martin) who had been a Registered Nurse for 20 years at the time started an in home care business named Visiting Angels. Visiting Angels provides personalized in home services catered mainly to seniors but also assisting people with disabilities or people recovering after an accident.

I have no clinical training whatsoever and instead have a business degree from Northwood University. Around 2007, my Mother asked me to join her in working for her business. When I started working with my Mother I began by handling many business related tasks such as HR functions, payroll, account receivables and payables and such.

As a natural progression of working in the business, after a few years I started to go out to the homes and meet families looking for help and set up our home care services. This is where my eyes became open to the issues individuals and families were dealing with surrounding Alzheimer's and other related dementias.

I really had no experiences with Alzheimer's until I started meeting these families affected. I would go and meet with a family and often times you could tell how close knit this family used to be based on pictures around the house and stories I would be told. But often times these families were falling apart due to the stress of caring for someone with Alzheimer's. I witnessed situations where families were divided because they did not know where to turn for information, diagnoses and support. It was heartbreaking to understand that so many families were affected with little community education and support.

Over the next years I learned more about Alzheimer's through volunteering on the Saginaw Walk to End Alzheimer's committee and through advocacy work also.

After years of helping other families, I was personally affected by this disease. My Mother, Karen Martin-RN was diagnosed with dementia back in 2017. After fiercely battling the disease for years she succumbed to the disease last April 2020 at the age of 73.

The state of Michigan is far behind other states in what we are doing to help support those dealing with this disease. Creating a dementia unit at MDHHS is a step in the right direction.