

**House Bill 614 – Dementia Care Navigation Program**  
**FAVORABLE**

Chair Pena-Melnyk,

My name is Brenda Fried, and I am here to ask for support of House Bill 614. Shortly after my dad passed away unexpectedly, I remember my mom saying to me, "your dad remembered what I forgot." That was a sentence that changed my life. It was then that I realized that her forgetfulness was a little more serious than I realized, and I wasn't going back to Louisiana. It was time to come home to Baltimore and take care of my mom. It was as if she turned off the lights after he passed away, and her dementia escalated quickly.

For me, I had to turn my back on my corporate career of over 30 years where I had risen to the level of Vice President of Marketing during my highest earning years. It was now taking my mom to her many doctors' appointments, ordering, monitoring, and dispensing her meds, paying her bills, doing her grocery shopping. I would take her out to eat, go shopping, watch a movie on TV, whatever she wanted to do. My objective was that she would not have to worry about anything. I just wanted her to be happy.

I couldn't take on a traditional job as I would have had to take too much time off just about every week to care for my mom. I needed the flexibility to work around my mom's schedule. I did some consulting, Chair Pena-Melnyk, but I couldn't spend enough of the right hours building my business. I was also a real estate investor, but working with contractors was beyond challenging and ultimately, they destroyed my business and cost me many thousands of dollars. The financial toll on me personally was the loss of over \$1 million in income as well as having to take distributions from my IRA, putting any thinking of my own retirement far, far in the future.

Yes, I also think about my own future. My grandmother had Alzheimer's. My mom had Alzheimer's. What's going to happen to me? Both my grandmother and mother had children who loved and cared for them. I don't have children. I will need to be prepared, if G-d forbid I fall prey to this horrible disease, to arrange for my own care. But I will tell you that the 7 years I was my mom's primary caregiver cost me dearly financially. But would I do it all over again? Absolutely....because she is my mom.

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