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**Alzheimer's Association- Greater MI Chapter**

Thank you Representative Kurtz and the House Committee on Families, Children, and Seniors for taking this important legislation, Senate Bill 466, up in your committee today. Thank you also to the sponsor, Senator Schuitmaker.

The Association is proud to support of this legislation. We believe that it is of great value and would ensure immediate action is taken when a senior or vulnerable adult goes missing. Action taken currently varies from community to community.

If I were to tell you about a vulnerable adult that wandered, you might immediately picture an elderly gentleman. Maybe in your mind you would see him slowly walking down a side-walk and getting as far as two blocks from his home before someone immediately recognizes him as out of place.

If only this were often the reality. When adults wander they can take car keys, get into automobiles and cover a great distance before they are even discovered missing. We even had a case in Macomb county where a gentleman made his way to the airport and purchased a plane ticket. Those with dementia often head towards the sound of running water or the woosh of fast-moving freeway traffic.

Alzheimer's attacks the mind, but the body can be completely healthy. This can make it difficult to without the aid of an alert system identify a vulnerable adult that has wandered and needs assistance. The progression and impact of the disease are different in everyone. Someone with Alzheimer's who has never shown a tendency to wander can slip out of the door in a matter of moments even under the most diligent caregivers watch. Someone who has long been able to go to the store for small errands can become confused and be missing for days. Studies have shown that 6 out of 10 people who are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia will wander at some

point. Every moment that they are gone increases the chance that the episode will be fatal.

Too many families have had to deal with this situation without the aid of an alert system. For two weeks in the Fall of 2010 there was a frantic search for 85 year old Oakland County resident Norris Lee who wandered away from a gathering at the Birmingham Community Center. Norris was in the early stages of the disease, but was showing few signs of progression. His friends that he was having lunch with at the men's club meeting didn't even know about his diagnosis. He could tell you all about the Detroit Tigers starting lineup and showed little signs of confusion. He wandered away, unnoticed from the center and was found two weeks later in a wooded area.

In 2011 in Michigan there were 504,550 dementia caregivers that gave over 574,581,267 hours of unpaid care to over 200,000 Michigan residents living at home with dementia. When the Association releases their Facts & Figures 2012 report on dementia on Thursday, Michigan will be in the top 10 states as far as the number of unpaid (family/ friend) dementia caregivers. These caregivers represent a huge savings to our state and the long-term care system.

This alert is another way in which we can assist caregivers. Recent data also indicates that 800,000 of the 5.4 million adults living with the disease nationwide live alone. In Michigan, we also have many individuals who have left the state of Michigan to seek employment. They are now trying to participate in long-distance caregiving for parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Americans are living longer- well into their 80's and 90's due to advances in medicine and technology. The communities that they live in need to continue to advance as well to meet their needs- the needs of an aging society. Additionally, a large segment of the American population — the baby boom generation — is reaching the age of greater risk for Alzheimer's and other dementias. The first baby boomers reached age 65 in 2011. By 2030, the segment of the U.S. population age 65 and older is expected to double, and the estimated 71 million older Americans will make up approximately 20 percent of the total population.

For Norris Lee's family, the Mozelle-Pierce family, and all of those that will come after them, we ask you to please vote this legislation out of committee.

The Association is proud to support Senate Bill 466. Similar legislation is already in place in 27 states, including Indiana and Illinois, and has saved lives.