

Alzheimer's 'First Responders' bill gains support

Kym Klass, Montgomery Advertiser 5:15 p.m. CT March 8, 2017



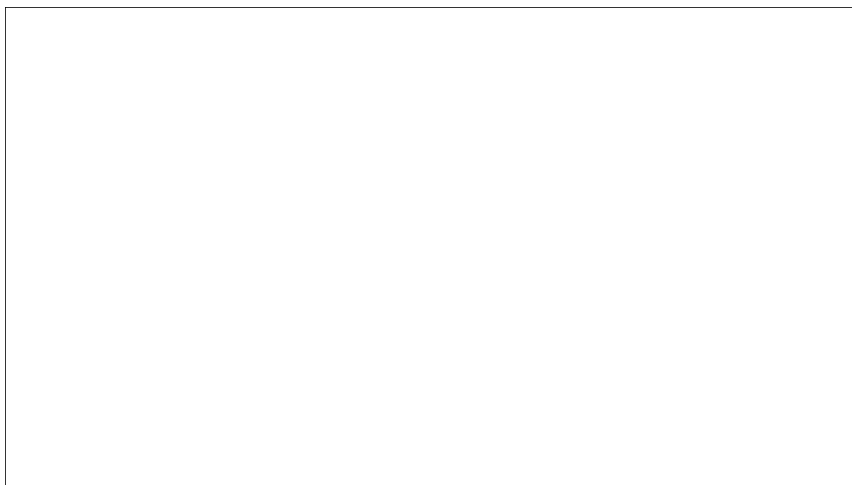
(Photo: Kym Klass / Montgomery Advertiser)

Family members and caregivers of those diagnosed with Alzheimer's rallied outside the Alabama State House on Wednesday in support of a bill that would require training for First Responders who come into contact with those living with the disease.

HB310, authored by Rep. Laura Hall, would require all first responders within each agency's respective jurisdiction to undergo training to be prepared to deal with people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

"I care because my mother had Alzheimer's and so did my husband," Hall said. "It's personal, yet it is so important. And I think unless you have been in the shoes of the individuals here, the caretakers, you only have a slight idea of the challenges they are facing."

ADVERTISING



In the United States, more than five million Americans live with Alzheimer's, and every 66 seconds of every day, someone in the U.S. develops the disease. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S., and affects 90,000 Alabamians.

The Alzheimer's Association spearheaded the introduction of HB310 through the work of Hall.

"This legislation ensures that when law enforcement, firefighters and paramedics encounter loved ones, they will be better prepared to offer their services but also support those affected by dementia," said Brandi Medina, director of programs and education with the Alzheimer's Association, Mid South Chapter.

Last year, 303,000 caregivers gave more than 345 million hours of unpaid care in the state. By the year 2025, about 110,000 Alabamians will live with Alzheimer's.

James Perdue, commissioner of the Alabama department of mental health, spoke at the rally, sharing that both of his parents were diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

"They became strangers at home," he said. "They were strangers around the people that knew them and loved them. So I understand that. I struggled with it. To take your mother and your father and watch them go through this debilitating disease. There is not enough that we can do. I encourage you, continue, don't give up, continue the fight, and we'll beat this disease one day. I'd like to do it for my parents."

Read or Share this story: <http://on.mgmadv.com/2mHI4O8>

