

# alzheimer's association™

Western and Central Washington State Chapter  
800.848.7097 | [www.alzwa.org](http://www.alzwa.org)

Letter to the Editor  
October 22, 2010

Dear Seattle Times,

Michael Berens' series "[Seniors for Sale](#)" focuses on the need for closer DSHS oversight of adult family homes, where some of our most vulnerable residents live. At least 40% of those in adult homes have a cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's, a complicated and profoundly challenging disease that requires skilled, devoted long-term care. While the overwhelming majority of adult homes are well-run, some fall short, and that is unacceptable. As Berens' investigation shows, lack of oversight from DSHS has allowed tragic results.

DSHS plays a critical role in keeping our vulnerable residents safe, but laying blame for this crisis entirely at the feet of DSHS doesn't solve the problem. It's about DSHS, but it's also about the Legislature, and it's about all of us.

In 2005, our Washington State Legislature established a Task Force to develop recommendations for improving our long term care system. The final report contains a variety of recommendations about safety and care management, many of which are gathering dust.

We need to finish what was started and follow through on these recommendations. Let's hold DSHS, the Legislature, and ourselves accountable, and let's take this opportunity to address the larger issues that will only worsen over time.

Sincerely,

Eileen Alexander  
Board Member  
Alzheimer's Association  
Western and Central Washington State Chapter