



The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senate
170 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

May 8, 2024

Dear Senators Klobuchar and Capito:

On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM), including our nationwide network of advocates, thank you for your continued leadership on issues and legislation important to Americans living with Alzheimer's and other dementia, and to their caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association and AIM write today to strongly support the Accelerating Access to Dementia & Alzheimer's Provider Training (AADAPT) Act, S. 4276, which will empower primary care providers to better diagnose Alzheimer's and other dementia and deliver high-quality, person-centered care in community-based settings.

Nearly 7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, and by 2050 this number is expected to rise to nearly 13 million. Alzheimer's is one of the costliest conditions in the United States. In 2024, total payments for all individuals with Alzheimer's or other dementia are estimated at \$360 billion (not including unpaid caregiving). By 2050, these costs are projected to rise to nearly \$1.1 trillion. Only half of those living with Alzheimer's disease are diagnosed and of those, only half are told of their diagnosis. The value of an accurate and early diagnosis cannot be ignored, quality of life can be significantly impacted and could save up to \$231 billion in 2050 in medical and care costs.

Primary care providers are at the frontline and the first stop for many people concerned with their cognitive abilities. With specialists often backlogged when accessible at all, primary care must be better equipped to detect and diagnose causes of dementia directly. In 85 percent of cases, the initial diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is made by clinicians who are not dementia specialists, usually primary care providers. Recent studies show half of primary care physicians reported that they do not feel adequately prepared to care for individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementia. Quality care delivered by trained providers leads to better health outcomes for individuals and caregivers and puts less strain on health systems. Project ECHO programs have shown they can help address the knowledge gaps felt by many primary care providers.

Project ECHO, a video-conference-based continuing education program, improves health outcomes while reducing geographic barriers and the cost of care through a team-based approach. Alzheimer's and dementia Project ECHO programs have successfully provided continuing education through interactive, case-based video sessions, and bring this training to rural and medically underserved areas where primary care providers are especially strained.

Project ECHO is a global movement with over 900 ECHO programs across 193 countries to improve access to high quality care for over 74 health conditions and other categories (Project ECHO 2022 Annual Report). It has been widely studied and shown to be an effective educational tool and practice improvement initiative that can improve provider skills, knowledge, and confidence to better manage common, complex disease conditions in the primary care environment. Evidence also suggests that Project ECHO can improve patient outcomes, reduce costs of care, and save patients the burden and cost of traveling to seek out specialty care. The Alzheimer's Association and AIM have been longtime supporters of Project ECHO.

The AADAPT Act would provide virtual Alzheimer's and dementia education and training to more primary care providers to help them better understand the detection, diagnosis, care, and treatment of Alzheimer's and other forms

of dementia at the first point of entry for most people. Through grants, the bill would build upon the ECHO program to run Alzheimer's and dementia Project ECHOs to address the knowledge gaps and workforce capacity issues primary care providers face with the increasing population living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia. This bill would expand access for people in rural, frontier, and medically underserved areas to receive the diagnosis, care, and support they need from providers they know by encouraging providers to participate in an ECHO program focused on Alzheimer's and dementia.

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM deeply appreciate your continued leadership on behalf of all Americans living with Alzheimer's and other dementia. If you have any questions about this or any other legislation, please contact Jennifer Pollack, Director of Access Policy, at jpollack@alz-aim.org or at 202.638.7032.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel M. Conant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Conant
Executive Director, Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM)
Vice President, Alzheimer's Association