



The Honorable Brian Schatz  
United States Senate  
722 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
United States Senate  
231 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

June 21, 2019

Dear Senators Schatz, Kaine and Murkowski:

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 dementias, and to their caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association and AIM are proud to support the Expanding Capacity for Health Outcomes (ECHO) Act of 2019 (S.1618), which would increase access to care in rural areas by expanding the use of technology-based collaborative learning and capacity building models. These education models, often referred to as Project ECHO, have the ability to increase access to earlier diagnoses and higher quality care for people living with Alzheimer's, particularly in underserved areas.

More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's and, without significant action, nearly 14 million Americans will have Alzheimer's by 2050. This explosive growth will cause Alzheimer's costs to increase from an estimated \$290 billion in 2019 to more than \$1.1 trillion in 2050 (in 2019 dollars). These mounting costs threaten to bankrupt families, businesses and our health care system. Unfortunately, our work is only growing more urgent.

The Alzheimer's Association launched two Project ECHO pilot programs in 2018: one in primary care settings focused on dementia diagnosis and care; and one in assisted living communities focused on person-centered dementia care. These six month, biweekly programs aimed to give providers the knowledge, skills, and confidence to improve care for people living with Alzheimer's in their own communities. According to an evaluation of the programs by the Center for Evaluation and Applied Research at The New York Academy of Medicine, primary care participants reported the most significant knowledge gains in identifying and screening for dementia, medication management, and communication with patients and family members. The evaluation also showed that participants from assisted living communities said the increased knowledge led to a change in their practices and gave them a better understanding of person-centered care.

The ECHO Act of 2019 would provide federal funding to help expand the use of these types of innovative medical education programs to connect providers in rural and underserved areas with specialists at academic hubs. This expansion and evaluation of Project ECHO will increase access to specialized health care, like better dementia diagnosis and care, and improve the quality of life for those that need it the most.

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM deeply appreciate your continued leadership on behalf of all Americans living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. We look forward to working with you to advance this bill in the Senate. If you have any questions about this or any other legislation, please contact Rachel Conant, Senior Director of Federal Affairs, at [rconant@alz-aim.org](mailto:rconant@alz-aim.org) or at 202.638.7121.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Egge', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Egge  
Chief Public Policy Officer  
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs  
Alzheimer's Association