



The Honorable Robert Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

September 30, 2019

Dear Ranking Member Casey,

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. We also thank you for working in a bipartisan manner to introduce the Stop the Wait Act (H.R. 4386/S. 2496), which could be an enormous help to persons living with dementia, families, and caregivers.

Your proposal to eliminate the waiting period for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and to phase out the two-year waiting period for Medicare coverage could be a particular benefit to younger individuals living with dementia. There are approximately 200,000 Americans under the age of 65 who are living with early- or younger-onset Alzheimer's disease or another dementia. Many of them are still in the workforce and raising families. Due to their cognitive impairment, they must eventually leave their jobs, losing both a source of income and their employer-sponsored health insurance. Families are reduced to a single or no source of income and must pay the considerable costs of dementia care out-of-pocket. During the waiting periods for access to SSDI benefits and Medicare, they are hemorrhaging resources to cope with a complex disease that impacts nearly every aspect of their lives.

Expediting these individuals' access to SSDI benefits will help to close the gaps in needed income and Medicare coverage will provide them with health care services to cope with their dementia diagnoses and the multiple chronic conditions common to many persons with dementia. We've also heard from many care partners and families what a relief it was once they gained access to these benefits, providing some relief in the face of a devastating diagnosis.

Thank you again for working to improve the quality of care and life for many of the most vulnerable Americans, including those living with Alzheimer's and related dementias. If you have any questions or if we can be of assistance, please contact Rachel Conant, Vice President of Federal Affairs, at rconant@alz-aim.org or at 202.638.7121.

Sincerely,

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