



The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
U.S Senate Minority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2020

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

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 also thank you for your crucial and timely work to support families affected by COVID-19. We are especially grateful for provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (H.R. 748) that will benefit people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia, and their families.

People living with Alzheimer's and other dementia are at increased risk of having serious complications relating to COVID-19 due to their typical age and likelihood of coexisting conditions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, older adults and those with serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease are at higher risk of getting very sick from this virus. There are currently 5.8 million Americans age 65 or older living with Alzheimer's dementia and more than 95 percent of people with the disease have one or more other chronic conditions. This includes 38 percent of people with Alzheimer's that also have heart disease and 37 percent that also have diabetes.

There are also over 16 million Americans providing unpaid care for loved ones living with Alzheimer's and other dementia. In 2019, these caregivers provided an estimated 18.6 billion hours of care valued at nearly \$244 billion. Approximately one-quarter of these caregivers are "sandwich generation" caregivers, meaning that they care not only for an aging parent, but also for children under age 18.

The CARES Act includes several provisions which will help people living with Alzheimer's and other dementia including an increase in funding for inspections of nursing facilities and their infection control practices. At age 80, approximately 75 percent of people with Alzheimer's dementia live in a nursing home. These inspections could mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes, protect this vulnerable population, and save lives. Second, the bill ensures that seniors living on low, fixed incomes can afford the treatment they need if they are diagnosed

with COVID-19. Third, the Act allows a State agency or an area agency on aging to transfer 100 percent of their Older Americans Act (OAA) funds for uses they consider appropriate to meet the needs of the State or area served. Additionally, the CARES Act allows State agencies to extend eligibility of home-delivered meals to individuals isolated due to social distancing as well individuals who are homebound due to disability. This is especially important given the fact that 70 percent of all people with Alzheimer's live in the community.

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM thank you for including extensions for the Medicaid Money Follows the Person program and protections from spousal impoverishment for married individuals receiving Medicaid-funded home- and community-based services through November 30, 2020. Medicaid pays for long-term care services and nursing homes for some people with very low income and low assets, and the high use of these services by people with dementia translates into high costs to Medicaid. Average annual Medicaid payments per person for Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's or other dementias were 23 times as great as average Medicaid payments for Medicare beneficiaries without Alzheimer's or other dementias. These important extensions will help families and caregivers from becoming poverty-stricken in order for their loved ones to qualify for long-term care from Medicaid.

Lastly, the Alzheimer's Association and AIM were happy to see the inclusion of provisions to expand access to telehealth. Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's and other dementias are more likely than those without dementia to have other chronic conditions. While 26 percent of Medicare beneficiaries age 65 and older with Alzheimer's and other dementias have five or more chronic conditions, only 4 percent of Medicare beneficiaries without dementia have five or more chronic conditions. Most people with dementia also develop at least one dementia-related behavior like hallucinations and aggression, and a significant percentage of these individuals have serious associated clinical implications. Improved access to virtual and telehealth services allow persons with dementia to avoid unnecessary visits or travel that could further compromise their physical health, and also provide strained caregivers help managing medical needs or behaviors in the home.

Again, 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 Rachel Conant, Vice President of Federal Affairs, at rconant@alz-aim.org or at 202.638.7121.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Egge', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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