



The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines
U.S. Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martha McSally
U.S. Senate
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

July 2, 2020

Dear Chairman Grassley, Senator Daines, and Senator McSally,

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. Thank you for introducing the *Emergency Support for Nursing Homes and Elder Justice Reform Act of 2020* and we are proud to support this important legislation.

The burden of Alzheimer's on individuals and families continues to grow. More Americans are living with the disease — there are more than 5 million seniors age 65 and older living with Alzheimer's in 2020. By 2050, that number is expected to rise to nearly 14 million. These individuals are at heightened risk for experiencing elder abuse. Elder abuse is the intentional or negligent act by any person that causes serious harm to an older adult. This harm may be physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and/or financial. As many as 62 percent of persons living with dementia experience psychological abuse and as many as one-fourth have been physically abused. Additionally, one study found that 60 percent of elderly victims of sexual abuse have cognitive impairment. Nearly one-third (31 percent) of adults with dementia have experienced more than one form of abuse.

Thank you for including the Alzheimer's Association and AIM priority legislation, the *Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act (S. 3703/H.R. 6813)* which would require the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop training materials to assist professionals supporting victims of abuse living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. With the current COVID-19 pandemic and given the growing population of persons with dementia, police, emergency personnel, and social workers will increasingly encounter these vulnerable individuals, and working with them can be fundamentally different from working with other older victims of abuse or exploitation. For example, individuals living with dementia often have difficulty understanding or explaining situations. Common behaviors experienced by individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementias could be viewed as uncooperative, disruptive, or combative unless professionals have training on the unique needs of someone living with dementia. The *Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act* addresses this need and will improve interactions between justice personnel and our constituents. This bipartisan bill is consistent with the *National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease* and will help ensure greater success for DOJ's efforts to combat elder abuse, neglect, and financial fraud targeting seniors. Additionally, S. 3703/H.R. 6813 has been widely supported by leaders in the aging community, including the Elder Justice Coalition.

Thank you also for incorporating provisions that are consistent with the Alzheimer's Association's Long-Term Care Policy Recommendations. Across the country more than 2 million people live in long-term and residential care communities. These residents, their family members, and staff are in crisis. COVID-19 has been especially disruptive, widespread, and deadly for residents and staff in long-term care settings, where it is estimated that more than one-third of all COVID-19 related deaths are residents and workers have died from the coronavirus at nursing homes and other long-term care communities.

This bill requires any State that accepts COVID-19 funds to provide personal protective equipment for the safety of state surveyors and personnel, and provides testing deemed sufficient by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for nursing home staff and residents. Additionally, it establishes strike teams to be activated to help nursing homes that are identified as “hot spots” and in need of additional support. Lastly, this bill addresses social isolation and ensures people living with dementia are able to communicate with designated family and friends by directing the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that nursing home residents have reasonable access to the internet to support visual telecommunication.

Again, the Alzheimer’s Association and AIM deeply appreciate your continued leadership on behalf of all Americans living with Alzheimer’s and other dementia. We look forward to working with you in a bipartisan manner to address these important issues. 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 long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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