

May 18, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

We write to ask that you consider an increase to \$60 million for the Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2022.

The proportion of the U.S. population over 55 years old is increasing at rate 20 times larger than the growth rate of the collective population under 55. Our health care system is not adequately investing in keeping people healthy into their highest ages. The health care needs of older adults coping with dementia and other chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer account for more than 90% of the nation's \$3.5 trillion in annual healthcare costs. Further, the health and economic burdens of chronic disease are disproportionately borne by communities of color and women, presenting an urgent health equity challenge.

The impact of COVID-19 on older Americans with chronic conditions laid bare the urgent need to address the lack of public health infrastructure supporting older adults, especially in communities of color. People with dementia had twice the risk of developing COVID-19 as other adults and Black Americans living with dementia were three times as likely to contract COVID-19 as their White counterparts.

As the pandemic has demonstrated, chronic diseases and infectious diseases are inextricably linked. In the absence of vaccines, good underlying health is the best way to prevent severe infection and death from communicable diseases.

Recent research confirms that a significant percentage of dementia, which ranks the top of fears of aging Americans, could be delayed - and in some cases prevented - by early intervention. Risk and protective factors for dementia include hypertension, exercise, social engagement, smoking, hearing loss, depression, traumatic brain injury, diabetes, obesity and education. Many of these factors are also demonstrated risk factors for COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program (ADHAP) is the only place within the CDC dedicated specifically to the promoting the health of older Americans across multiple chronic conditions. ADHAP is the central locus for addressing health equity challenges across chronic conditions that share common risk factors. Yet, last year, total funding for this work represented about .25% of the overall CDC budget, standing at \$20.5 million.

As Congress works to draft the Labor-HHS appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2022, the undersigned organizations request a significant increase, tripling funding for the Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program to \$60 million, to allow for urgently needed investment in infrastructure, health promotion, coordination of healthy-aging efforts across the agency and a proactive focus on addressing the social determinants of health and health disparities. This request is consistent with our support of overall tripling of the investment in the Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Specifically, this funding will support the Disease Control and Prevention's Alzheimer's and Healthy Aging program work to:

- strengthen programs that reduce risk, promote health equity, and support populations with a high burden of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD),
- build public health infrastructure as per the BOLD Act and Healthy Brain Initiative,
- expand capacity in state, tribal and territorial public health departments to promote the health of older adults within an age-friendly public health system,
- expand healthy aging work to include coordinating healthy aging efforts across the agency and implementing a public-private initiative to reduce dementia risk,
- funding applied research and translation for public health practice, and
- support of public health strategies for addressing the social determinants of health that contribute to disparities in healthy aging and brain health.

The Administration and the scientific community have identified Alzheimer's disease (the most common form of dementia) as a priority area – with good reason. Dementia ranks at the top of fears of aging Americans and is on track to triple by 2060. It is the only top-10 cause of death in the U.S. with no known cure. ADRD research *is* critical. And it is also true that ADRD is a *public health* challenge that is intricately connected to other chronic conditions.

Significant investment is needed to ensure that we are not only increasing lifespan but also *health* span. Any efforts to improve pandemic preparedness and prevent the spread of infectious disease must also include efforts to prevent chronic disease, address health disparities, and ultimately, improve underlying health and wellness for older Americans.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to increase support for the CDC's work to promote healthy aging and reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Niles Godes at ngodes@usagainstalzheimer.org.

Sincerely,

Aging Life Care Association®
Alliance for Aging Research
Alzheimer's Association
The Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation
Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM)
Alzheimer's Los Angeles
Alzheimer's New Jersey
Alzheimer's Orange County
Alzheimer's San Diego
American Association on Health and Disability
American Heart Association
American Medical Women's Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association

American Society on Aging
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Azusa Pacific University
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
Care Generation
Caring Kind
Caregiver Action Network
Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)
Center for BrainHealth®, University of Texas, Dallas
Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, Nevada
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging and Health Groups
Disability Policy Consortium
The Gerontological Society of America
Global Alzheimer's Platform Foundation
Healthy Kinder International, LLC
HealthyWomen
International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)
Justice in Aging
Health Equity Collaborative
Lakeshore Foundation
Latinos for a Secure Retirement
LEAD Coalition (Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer's Disease)
Lewy Body Dementia Association
Marilyn's Legacy
Midwest Asian Health Association
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Consumers League
National Association for Rural Mental Health
The National Association of State Long Term Care Ombudsmen (NASOP)
National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention
National Medical Association
Posit Science
ProVention Health Foundation
Society for Women's Health Research
The Pride Center at Equality Park
Trust for America's Health
UsAgainstAlzheimer's
VeteransAgainstAlzheimer's
Virtual Brain Health Center
Volunteers of America
Washington University School of Medicine, Department of Neurology
WomenAgainstAlzheimer's
YMCA of the USA