

# ResearchersAgainstAlzheimer's

June 28, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

As researchers who have dedicated our lives to pursuing treatments and therapies for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias we write to urge that as you assemble the Fiscal Year 2014 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor, HHS) Appropriations Act, you include the amount of public research funding necessary to achieve our national goal of preventing and treating Alzheimer's by 2025. Specifically, ResearchersAgainstAlzheimer's urges the Committee to respect the recommendations of the public members of the Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care, and Services and double the current level of funding for Alzheimer's research at the NIH as part of an effort to ramp up to \$2 billion within five years.

Despite the number of scientific and medical challenges before us, the members of ResearchersAgainstAlzheimer's are confident that the 2025 goal can be achieved if appropriate public and private resources are allocated to this mission. Recent actions by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to reallocate some modest funding for Alzheimer's disease research are helping to support a number of cutting-edge prevention trials and other potentially groundbreaking research projects. But while a good start, the amount of funding is not sufficient to the task at hand.

We applaud President Obama's call to increase Alzheimer's research spending at the NIH in FY 2014 by about \$80 million and see this as a step in the right direction. However, the scale of the human and economic impact of this disease compels a more significant increase in research resources this year and over the coming years which is why we request that you double the current level of funding for Alzheimer's research at NIH in FY 2014.

Alzheimer's disease is devastating to families and a grave threat to the nation's health and finances. We are committed to finding a treatment for Alzheimer's to stop the suffering of millions of Americans and their families. More than 5 million Americans currently suffer from Alzheimer's – a number that is expected to more than triple by 2050. A recent RAND Corporation study published in the New England Journal of Medicine concluded that the direct care costs of Alzheimer's far exceed the direct care costs of heart disease or cancer. When indirect costs – notably those associated with informal family caregiving – are factored in, the annual costs of Alzheimer's exceed \$200 billion annually, with about 70 percent of these costs shouldered by the federal government through Medicare and Medicaid spending.

From polio to cancer to heart disease and HIV/AIDS, we have seen time and again that a front-end investment in research pays long-term dividends. In the case of HIV/AIDS, an initial \$10 billion investment in the 1980s saved an estimated \$1.4 trillion in costs and saved countless lives. A robust commitment to Alzheimer's research has the same potential to stop this disease from robbing individuals of their identity and destroying the nation's health and financial wellbeing.

Congress recognized the threat posed by Alzheimer's when it unanimously enacted the National Alzheimer's Project Act, which mandated a National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease that enumerates as goal one preventing and effectively treating the disease by 2025. Now that we have a plan in place, we must provide the resources necessary to achieve its goals and objectives.

We understand the enormity of the federal funding challenges you must navigate in your role as Committee Chairman, including the setback posed by the sequester. At the same time, we urge that you recognize the enormity of the threats posed by Alzheimer's to our nation's health and wellbeing and do all you can to maximize our chances of stopping this dreadful disease.

Sincerely,

Founding Members of ResearchersAgainstAlzheimer's

*Affiliations are for identification purposes only and do not necessarily represent the endorsement of the affiliated institution.*

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