Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott,

On behalf of the Alzheimer’s Association, thank you for your leadership on issues of importance to family caregivers, especially those who care for those with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. The Alzheimer’s Association proudly supports the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act of 2015 (S. 1719/ H.R. 3099), which passed the Senate on December 8, 2015. We urge the Committee to take action on the Senate-passed bill. This legislation prioritizes family caregivers through the development and implementation of a national strategy to tackle the many problems and issues facing caregivers.

The Alzheimer’s Association is the world’s leading voluntary health organization on Alzheimer’s care, support and research. As you know, there are more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer’s disease, which is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and the only cause of death in the top 10 without a way to prevent, cure or even slow its progression. Alzheimer’s disease is the most costly disease in the United States and is set to increase like no other. In 2016, the cost of caring for those with Alzheimer’s disease will reach $236 billion and is expected to grow to $1.1 trillion by 2050. Without significant breakthroughs in the development of treatments or a cure, it is projected that as many as 16 million Americans will have Alzheimer’s by 2050.

In addition to its economic impact, Alzheimer’s disease places a tremendous burden on caregivers. In 2015, more than 15 million family members and friends provided 18.1 billion hours of unpaid care to people with Alzheimer’s and other dementias, at an economic value of over $221 billion. The physical demands associated with being a caregiver for someone with dementia can also be high. More than half of the caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s and other dementias provide help to the care recipient in getting in and out of bed. Further, about one-third of Alzheimer’s caregivers provide help getting to and from the toilet, bathing, managing incontinence and feeding. Caring for an individual with Alzheimer’s disease can also create or aggravate the health problems of a caregiver. The physical and emotional impact of caregiving on Alzheimer’s and other dementia caregivers resulted in an
estimated $10.2 billion in increased caregiver health costs in 2015. Finally, caring for an individual with Alzheimer’s can have a negative effect on employment, income and financial security. Among Alzheimer’s and dementia caregivers who are employed full or part time, 54 percent said they had to go in late, leave early or take time off because of their caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, more than one in six Alzheimer’s and dementia caregivers had to quit work entirely either to become a caregiver in the first place or because their caregiving duties became too burdensome.

The RAISE Family Caregivers Act would facilitate the creation of a national strategy to address the many issues facing caregivers today including: education and training, long-term services and supports, and financial stability and security. Improving assistance for family caregivers will have a positive impact on caregiver health and well-being and will result in a higher quality of care for their loved ones. This legislation is also consistent with the National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease, which seeks to expand and enhance training, education and support for caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias.

The Alzheimer’s Association appreciates your leadership on issues facing caregivers, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues to find innovative and effective strategies to support all family caregivers, including those who care for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. If you have any questions, please contact Rachel Conant, Director of Federal Affairs, at rconant@alz.org or at 202.638.7121.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Robert Egge
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs
Alzheimer’s Association