

FEDERAL PRIORITIES 2015

Alzheimer's disease is a growing crisis for our families and the economy. The federal government must address the challenges the disease poses and take bold action to confront this epidemic now.

1. Increase the commitment to Alzheimer's research

Alzheimer's is the most expensive disease in America. Nearly one in every five Medicare dollars is spent on someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia, and by 2050, it will be nearly one in every three dollars. Between now and 2050, caring for people with Alzheimer's will cost our country \$20.8 trillion. If we meet the goal of the National Alzheimer's Plan to have an Alzheimer's treatment by 2025, Medicare spending would be reduced on those with the disease by nearly 25 percent in 2050 alone – and the federal government would recoup its research investment within three years.

While Congress has recently provided additional funding for Alzheimer's research at the NIH – including an additional \$25 million in fiscal year 2015 – the chronic underinvestment in Alzheimer's research persists and it continues to fall far short of what researchers say is needed to reach the 2025 goal. For every \$100 that the NIH spends on Alzheimer's research, Medicare and Medicaid spend over \$26,000 caring for those with the disease. Congress must continue its commitment to the fight against Alzheimer's by **increasing funding for research by \$300 million** in fiscal year 2016.

2. Improve access to care planning

To ensure high quality medical care and better outcomes for individuals with Alzheimer's, the disease must be diagnosed, care must be planned, and the diagnosis must be noted in the individual's medical record. Studies also suggest that an early diagnosis and care planning improve a caregiver's long-term health. Yet, less than half of seniors who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, or their caregivers, are aware of the diagnosis. One reason is the lack of time and resources available to doctors to discuss treatment options and support services with newly-diagnosed individuals and their caregivers.

Consistent with the National Alzheimer's Plan's call for timely diagnosis and education for newly-diagnosed individuals, **the *Health Outcomes, Planning, and Education (HOPE) for Alzheimer's Act*** would provide Medicare coverage for comprehensive care planning services – for both the individual and his/her caregiver – following a dementia diagnosis. Providers would be required to document the diagnosis and care planning services in the individual's medical record. The federal government would conduct outreach to providers to educate them about the new benefit.