

Good afternoon Madam Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Susan Spalding and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter. The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Alzheimer's is a progressive brain disorder that damages and eventually destroys brain cells, leading to a loss of memory, thinking and other brain functions. Ultimately, Alzheimer's is fatal.

Alzheimer's is currently the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and the only one of the top ten without a means to prevent, cure or slow its progression.

Over five million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, including an estimated 100,000 in Minnesota. In addition, more than 245,000 people are providing care for those with the disease. With the first of the baby boom generation already over 65, this group is expected to double by 2030. Although Alzheimer's is not normal aging, age is the greatest

risk factor for the disease. Taken together, these factors will result in more and more Americans living with Alzheimer's - as many as 16 million by 2050, when there will be nearly one million new cases each year.

While deaths from other major diseases, including heart disease, stroke and HIV continue to experience significant declines, those from Alzheimer's have increased 68 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Direct costs of health care and long-term care for people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias are substantial, making Alzheimer's the most expensive disease in America.

A newly released 2015 report, *Changing the Trajectory of Alzheimer's Disease: How a Treatment by 2025 Saves Lives and Dollars*, calculates that a treatment in 2025 that delays the onset of Alzheimer's would cut the number of people in 2050 who have the disease by 42 percent — from 13.5 million to 7.8 million. The Alzheimer's Association's report also shows the positive impact of adequate funding and the potential consequences of under-funding. A copy of this report is in your folder.

Alzheimer's disease is an epidemic. Currently, 11 percent of Minnesotans over age 65 are living with the disease. More Minnesota families are going to be touched by Alzheimer's – AND at a frightening rate. Alzheimer's is the public health crisis of this century and the defining disease of the Baby Boom generation.

For millions of Americans, the heartbreak of watching a loved one struggle with Alzheimer's is a pain they know all too well. In addition to the human suffering caused by the disease, Alzheimer's creates an enormous strain on the health care system and significant burdens on family, state and federal budgets.

Minnesota is already a leader in addressing the Alzheimer's crisis and has a strong tradition of excellence in Alzheimer's and dementia research. The medical infrastructure in Minnesota is in place for Alzheimer's research projects, and continued investment in research could result in key findings leading to a solution. Given the growing burden Alzheimer's puts on our state, a commitment to research today will yield savings tomorrow.

Minnesota families impacted by Alzheimer's and other dementias appreciate the steadfast support of the Minnesota legislature. We look forward to your continued commitment to address the public health crisis of Alzheimer's disease. We ask this committee to take the lead in the 2015 session with a commitment equal to the scale of the crisis.

Minnesota House of Representatives
Health and Human Services Reform Committee

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Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter
March 17, 2015