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May 1, 2023

Dear Members of the Health and Human Appropriations Conference Committee:

The Alzheimer's Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting people living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. We are writing today to share our comments on the Health and Human Services Appropriations Omnibus bill.

Alzheimer's disease is a public health crisis. In 2020, 99,000 Minnesotans were living with Alzheimer's Disease or another form of dementia. That number is expected to increase by 21.2% by 2025. Alzheimer's and dementia impacts everyone but these impacts are not felt equally. Black people are twice as likely to have dementia, Latinos are 1.5 times as likely, and there are elevated rates in the Indigenous community. People of Color are also more likely to have misunderstandings about dementia and the nature of aging. Facing these racial disparities, the need for culturally relevant messaging on aging is more important than ever.

That's why we strongly support the following provisions in the Senate Version:

Alzheimer's Public Awareness Campaign: When engaging people of color on dementia and healthy aging, particularly in non-English speaking communities, it won't work to rehash or quickly translate existing public health materials. That's why we support funding in this bill for the Department of Health to go out and engage leaders in underserved communities and collaboratively develop culturally relevant information on Alzheimer's disease. This is especially important to ensure equitable access to new drug treatments that have the potential to transform how we treat Alzheimer's.

Community Health Worker Dementia Training: Community Health Workers are trusted messengers with a proven ability to connect underserved communities with accurate information and necessary resources. We support the additional funding for the Community Health Worker Alliance and legislation to develop a dementia training for community health workers to better support elders.

Thank you for the care and attention you all have brought to building the House and Senate omnibus budget bills. We appreciate this work and the bipartisan legislation we have mentioned in this letter.

Sincerely,

Sam Smith
State Affairs Manager
Alzheimer's Association