



The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related
Agencies (MilCon-VA) Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

February 16, 2023

Dear Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Boozman, and Senator Hassan:

On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM), including our nationwide network of advocates, thank you for your continued leadership on issues and legislation important to Americans living with Alzheimer's and other dementias and to their caregivers. We write to express our support for S. 10, the VA Clinician Appreciation, Recruitment, Education, Expansion, and Retention Support (CAREERS) Act of 2023, which aims to ensure the continuation of professional education and training for clinical staff of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA).

Nearly half a million American veterans have Alzheimer's — and as the population ages, that number is expected to grow. In 2015, an estimated 486,000 veterans were living with Alzheimer's. The annual number of veterans newly diagnosed with dementia has increased by more than 22% since 2008. For veterans, the prevalence may grow even faster in future years because they have a higher risk of developing dementia. The significant increase in the number of veterans with Alzheimer's and other dementias will place a heavy burden on the VA health care system, and in particular, nursing home care. More than 60% of VA's costs of caring for those with Alzheimer's are attributed to nursing home care.

As the rate of Alzheimer's and dementia among veterans increases, so does the need for members of the paid dementia care workforce. Workforce shortages will place an even bigger burden on family and friends who provide unpaid care — already an effort equivalent to nearly \$257 billion per year. The United States will have to nearly triple the number of geriatricians to effectively care for the number of people projected to have Alzheimer's in 2050, while efforts to increase recruitment and retention remain slow. From 2016 to 2026, the demand for direct care workers is projected to grow by more than 40 percent, while their availability is expected to decline.

The bipartisan CAREERS Act focuses on addressing the recruitment and retention of clinicians at the VA by providing the Department with more tools to compete for highly qualified medical personnel and support training for current and future clinicians. With this bill, the Department will ensure veterans living with Alzheimer's and dementia

receive the highest quality of care, which is of utmost importance. These resources are critical in serving the needs of our constituents, including those who have served in uniform. This bill is consistent with the goals of the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease to enhance care quality and efficiency and build a workforce with the skills to provide high-quality care. We applaud your work on ensuring the VA clinical staff has ample personnel and resources to address the needs of veterans living with Alzheimer's and dementia.

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM appreciate the Committee's steadfast support for veterans and their caregivers and the continued commitment to advancing issues important to the millions of military families affected by Alzheimer's and other dementia. If you have questions about this or any other legislation, please contact Sarah Tellock, Director of Congressional Affairs, at stellock@alz-aim.org or at 202.638.8676.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel M. Conant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Conant
Vice President, Federal Affairs
Alzheimer's Association