



The Honorable Julia Brownley
Chairwoman
The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Health
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Bergman
The United States House of Representatives
566 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 16, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Brownley and Representative Bergman:

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 H.R. 542, the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act of 2023, which aims to improve and expand home and community-based services (HCBS) for disabled and elderly veterans, ensuring they are able to remain in their homes and receive the care they need.

Nearly half a million American veterans have Alzheimer's — and as the population ages, that number is expected to grow. In 2022, an estimated 450,000 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 large 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.

People living with dementia and their caregivers often prefer to stay in the home for as long as possible. In fact, an estimated 65 percent of people with Alzheimer's live in the community, and states are driving much of the development of and better access to HCBS. State governments can reduce long-term costs and increase access to person-centered care in the home and community settings including respite and adult day programs, regardless of age or financial status through Medicaid and other state-supported programs. Several states are implementing innovative solutions to address Alzheimer's in the Medicaid and non-Medicaid spaces by developing critical, cost-effective, dementia-specific HCBS programs. These programs are allowing people with dementia and their caregivers to access services and support that are uniquely tailored to meet their needs, allowing them to remain in their homes and communities longer and enjoy a greater quality of life. A core set of HCBS, in addition to other services, will allow people with Alzheimer's to continue to remain in their communities and be independent for as long as possible.

The bipartisan Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act focuses on expanding access to HCBS for veterans across the country, including providing respite care for caregivers of veterans enrolled in home care programs. With this bill, the Veterans Affairs Health Administration will continue to

provide greater HCBS resources available across the country. 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 educate and expand support for people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their families upon diagnosis. We applaud your work on recognizing the needs of veterans living with Alzheimer's and dementia and ensuring they can choose to receive care in a place most comfortable for them, their families, and their caregivers.

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM appreciate the steadfast support for veterans and their caregivers and the continued commitment to advancing issues important to the millions of families affected by Alzheimer's and other dementia. We look forward to working with the Committee in a bipartisan way to address the challenges facing the dementia community, including increasing funding for HCBS. 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