



The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 5, 2024

Dear Senators Blumenthal and Cornyn:

On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM), including our nationwide networks of advocates, thank you for your continued leadership on issues and legislation important to Americans with Alzheimer's and other dementias and their caregivers. We write to express our support for the bipartisan Essential Caregivers Act of 2024 (S. 4280), which would amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to require skilled nursing facilities, nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities for the intellectually disabled, and inpatient rehabilitation facilities to permit essential caregivers access during any period in which regular visitation is restricted.

The burden of Alzheimer's on individuals and families continues to grow. Nearly 7 million Americans aged 65 and older lived with Alzheimer's dementia in 2024. Total payments for all individuals with Alzheimer's or other dementias are estimated at \$360 billion (not including unpaid caregiving) in 2024. Medicare and Medicaid are expected to cover \$231 billion or 64 percent of the total health care and long-term care payments for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias, which are projected to increase to more than \$1.1 trillion by 2050. These mounting costs threaten to bankrupt families, businesses, and our health care system. Unfortunately, our work is only growing more urgent.

Eighty-three percent of the help provided to older adults in the United States comes from family members, friends, or other unpaid caregivers. Compared with caregivers of people without dementia, caregivers of those with dementia indicate more substantial emotional, financial, and physical difficulties. Nearly half of all caregivers who provide help to older adults do so for someone living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. The Essential Caregivers Act of 2024 would safeguard residents in long-term care facilities by ensuring they have the right to in-person access to an essential caregiver during declared emergencies when visitations are restricted. The bipartisan measure seeks to avoid a repeat of the isolation and inadequate care that many long-term care residents faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it mandates that CMS establish clear and equitable guidelines for essential caregivers to ensure the safety of both facility staff and residents.

The Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement recognize the importance of essential caregivers during public health emergencies and the critical impact social isolation can have on dementia patients living in long-term care facilities. We sincerely appreciate your continued leadership on behalf of all Americans living with



Alzheimer's and other dementias. We look forward to continuing to work with you to advance this bill. If you have questions about this or any other legislation, please contact Jennifer Pollack, Director of Access Policy, at jpollack@alz-aim.org or at 202.638.7032.

Sincerely,

Rachel M. Conant

Rachel Conant
Executive Director, Alzheimer's Impact Movement
Senior Vice President, Public Policy, Alzheimer's Association