



The Honorable Jennifer Wexton
United States House of Representatives
1210 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
The United States House of Representatives
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

September 5, 2024

Dear Representatives Wexton and Bilirakis:

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 Harmonizing Environmental Analyses and Launching Therapeutic Hubs to Yield Bolstered Research And Innovation in Neurological Science (HEALTHY BRAINS) Act (H.R. 9233), which directs the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish Collaborative Centers for Neurodegenerative Disease Environmental Research.

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.

According to research reported this year at the 2024 Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC), environmental factors like wildfire smoke, motor vehicle emissions, and industrial activities all contribute to a type of air pollution known as fine particulate matter (PM2.5). This pollution consists of microscopic solid and liquid droplets in the air, with particles 30 times smaller than human hair. Research indicates that exposure to PM2.5 from wildfire smoke significantly increases the risk of dementia, even at lower levels of exposure, compared to PM2.5 from other sources. Although non-wildfire PM2.5 also elevates dementia risk, the effect is less pronounced than that of wildfire smoke. Breaking research such as this underscores the urgent need to continue to advance research into environmental risks for neurodegenerative diseases, as there is still much to uncover in many crucial areas, making the introduction of this bipartisan legislation timely and essential.

By establishing the Collaborative Centers for Neurodegenerative Disease Environmental Research under the bipartisan HEALTHY BRAINS Act, the NIH will be able to develop a nationwide neurodegenerative disease data system, establish a clearinghouse to improve understanding of environmental risks, offer training and educational programs to highlight the national significance of these environmental factors and bolster research into these



environmental risks factors, including environmental toxicants exposures, of neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease and atypical parkinsonian disorders (e.g., progressive supranuclear palsy), Alzheimer's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and multiple sclerosis (MS).

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM 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,

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

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