alzheimer's association®

April 4, 2019

To: Chair Sara Gelser and Member of the Senate Human Services Committee
From: Sara Kofman - Alzheimer's Association Oregon & SW Washington Chapter
Subject**: Support for SB 1035**

More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's and there are more than 67,000 individuals aged 65 and older living with the disease in Oregon. In 2018, there were an estimated 186,000 family caregivers of Oregonians with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia. That breaks down to nearly 212 million hours of unpaid care valued at more than $2.68 billion.

With Alzheimer's disease, it is not just those with the disease who suffer or struggle. It's also their caregivers – a job that usually falls on family and friends. Care for people with Alzheimer's and dementia is wide-ranging and in many instances all encompassing. It can be intrusive and very personal. For many, the demands of caregiving may cause a decline in their own health or aggravate existing health problems.

Evidence suggests that the stress of dementia care increases caregiver susceptibility to disease and health complications. Further, the longer a caregiver has been providing care, the more likely they are to report poor health. Nearly 40 percent of family caregivers of people with Alzheimer's report symptoms of depression. In 2018, the physical and emotional impact of Alzheimer's caregiving resulted in an estimated $136 million in increased caregiver health costs just in the state of Oregon.

Caregiving is demanding and caregivers need a break not only for their own health but for also for the health of the person receiving care. Respite care provides the caregiver with a short break to take care of their own health needs. When caregivers have access to respite care they can take care of errands and household chores or simply relax and take a break from the pressures of caregiving.

A growing body of research shows that supportive services for family caregivers, including education and respite, can improve wellbeing and quality of life for both caregivers and care recipients. Other studies have measured the effects of respite services on care recipients' wellbeing and quality of life, as well as the effect on preventing or delaying nursing home placement.

SB 1035 directs DHS Aging and People with Disabilities to convene stakeholders to develop a program and a Medicaid waiver proposal that will put Oregon on the pathway to providing much needed and deserved, respite options for family caregivers.

For these reasons, the Alzheimer's Association strongly supports SB 1035. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Please contact Sara Kofman at skofman@alz.org with any questions.