



February 3, 2021

To: Chair Williams and Members of the House Committee on Human Services
From: Sara Kofman, Alzheimer's Association Oregon and Southwest Washington Chapter
Subject: Support for HB 2397

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2397, legislation that maintains uniform care standards for long-term care providers across Oregon and creates the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Innovation Pilot Project.

Nationally, among individuals living in residential care settings, 42 percent are living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. In Oregon that number is higher. An estimated 47 percent of individuals in Oregon's community-based care settings have Alzheimer's or another dementia, according to the 2018 Community Based Care Project led by Portland State University's Institute on Aging. As such, the Alzheimer's Association has concerns about individual municipalities developing regulatory structures for long-term care settings as they may lack specific knowledge and expertise regarding the complexity of dementia care. We appreciate that long-term care providers in Oregon are already regulated by the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The regulatory framework developed by ODHS and CMS takes into consideration the unique care needs of individuals with dementia.

Additionally, the Alzheimer's Association recognizes the profound benefit of emergency medical services for all Oregonians, including individuals living in long-term care communities. We applaud the effort in HB 2397 to create an Emergency Medical Services Innovation Pilot Project. Again, due to the number of individuals with dementia living in Oregon's long-term care settings, EMS providers are likely interacting with individuals with dementia when responding to calls in these communities. People with Alzheimer's may present as uncooperative, disruptive, and combative when they have difficulty communicating and understanding what is happening. The EMS Innovation Pilot Project is an opportunity to try out different strategies that effectively address difficult situations and ensure the welfare and safety of individuals with dementia as well as the safety of EMS responders.

Alzheimer's is more than a disease about memory loss and it is not a normal part of aging. Alzheimer's disease is a fatal and progressive disease that attacks the brain, killing nerve cells and tissue, affecting an individual's ability to remember, think, plan and ultimately function. It is the sixth leading cause of death in our state. Today, an estimated 69,000 Oregonians are living with Alzheimer's disease. By 2025 – barring the development of medical breakthroughs to prevent, stop or slow Alzheimer's disease – this number is projected to grow by more than 20 percent.

For these reasons, the Alzheimer's Association supports the passage of HB 2397. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Please contact Sara Kofman at skofman@alz.org with any questions.