

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

As a practicing neurologist specializing in dementia care in Oregon, I am writing to ask you to support SB 796, which would establish the Oregon Memory Net.

Before I joined the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Layton Center for Alzheimer's Disease and the Portland VAMC, I had practiced general neurology in the community for over a decade. While I worked with patients with a variety of neurological conditions, I noticed an increasing proportion of patients came in with dementia and related conditions. The patients and their families also often had concerns of caregiver stress and long-term care planning related to memory care.

As the population ages, the demand for cognitive care and dementia related care is becoming overwhelming to the community healthcare providers nationwide. Patients demand access to dementia care, early diagnosis and support for care planning. The imbalance between the dementia care demand and the healthcare resources has reached the crisis point, not only at the academic centers like OHSU as well as in the community clinics in Oregon. That is why I think the SB 796 would be a critical investment for the Oregonians.

The Oregon Memory Net is a modest investment to support the early detection and diagnosis of dementia. With more than 69,000 Oregonians living with Alzheimer's and growing, and with many more Oregonians directly impacted by the disease, we must take steps to address this public health crisis. An early and accurate diagnosis is a critical component to this challenge and has numerous benefits:

- Better management of co-occurring chronic conditions
- Access to support services for both the individual and caregivers
- Access to available treatments and participation in clinical trials
- Ample time for advance care and financial planning
- Opportunities to build a care team
- Better safety, as families can ensure their environments are prepared for progression of the dementia
- Gives the person with dementia time to focus on what is important

In addition to the direct benefit to those impacted, an early and accurate diagnosis combined with comprehensive care planning will directly benefit the state budget and help to alleviate some of the other challenges we are facing in our health care system broadly. Nationally, if those in the "mild cognitive impairment" stage were all diagnosed, the country would save an estimated \$7 trillion in health and long-term care expenditures (2018, Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures).

Appropriately diagnosing and managing dementia and supporting family caregivers' well-being has been shown to reduce emergency room utilization and delay entry into long term care settings, both of which are expensive and challenged by capacity issues.

Many of the patients live in the rural areas. Those who seek dementia care have to travel long distance to Portland or they currently lack access. The current wait time for dementia diagnostic services in Portland (where access is greatest) is over 200 days. It is essential that the state step up and provide these investments which will pay off with cost savings down the road.

As you may know, across the country, many states have plans in place to support early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's and other dementias, including Georgia, Wisconsin, Florida, California, New York, Florida, Texas, Montana, and Virginia. Oregon must do the same. The Oregon Memory Net would establish a state partnership with the only NIA (National Institute of Aging)-designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at OHSU to establish a Memory Assessment Clinic outside the Portland-Metro area. This model is taken from the very successful Georgia Memory Net program, which has become a national model. It is efficient, easily scalable, and proven.

**Please support SB 796 to establish the Oregon Memory Net.**

Sincerely,

Yanan Shang, MD

Geriatric Neurology Fellow

OHSU and Portland VAMC