

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

March 20, 2025

RE: Support for HB3421

Dear Chairman Nosse, Vice-Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the Committee:

I'm writing to ask for your support for HB 3421. My name is Patty Unfred, I live in SE Portland, and I serve as a volunteer ambassador with the Alzheimer's Association of Oregon.

Like many other Oregonians, Alzheimer's disease has impacted my family. My sister, Sue Unfred-Hays, was diagnosed at age 55 with early onset Alzheimer's. After a 25-year career with Oregon Department of Justice, serving as an attorney representing children in cases of abuse, Sue was struggling to remember things in her work and home life. After several years of mis-diagnoses, Sue finally received the diagnosis that none of us wanted – early onset Alzheimer's. In some ways she is lucky, because she and her husband, Bill, were able to retire early and had the means and the education to navigate the complex system of health care and insurance. Sue was also one of the first in Oregon to receive lecanimab, a drug that slows the progression of the disease, once it was approved by the FDA.

For several years, Sue didn't want to share her illness due to the stigma connected to Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. But she's reached a point where she wants to advocate for early detection, which is the only hope currently for people with Alzheimer's. This is why I am asking for your support of HB 3421.

- Today more than 80,000 Oregonians are living with Alzheimer's disease, but as many as half of them are not formally diagnosed. An early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer's can improve access to care and support services, enhance quality of life and reduce the financial impact of the disease.
- This bill, HB 3421, mandates that insurance cover biomarker testing when that testing is medically indicated and consistent with clinical practice guidelines, and provided in a manner that limits the need for multiple biopsies or specimen samples. The bill is structured to be good for patients and cost-effective for Oregon.
- With the historic Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of treatments that slow the progression of the disease, early detection and

diagnosis of Alzheimer's are even more critical to ensure individuals receive the most benefit at the earliest point possible.

- There have been recent advancements in science, including a combined blood test for cognitive decline that has shown a 90% accuracy rate in determining whether memory loss is due to Alzheimer's disease, according to one study. While these results are very encouraging for the future, there is currently no single test that can determine if a person is living with Alzheimer's or another dementia, and the journey to receive a dementia diagnosis is often long and arduous, robbing individuals and their families of precious time. Current biomarker testing can speed diagnosis by an average of two years.
- Continued progress around blood-based amyloid biomarker markers is likely to lead to new diagnostic tools coming to market within the next couple of years.

I am a breast cancer survivor, in large part because early detection for breast cancer is now part of routine health care. My cancer was caught early and I received the treatment I needed. We need the same approach to early detection for Alzheimer's and biomarker testing is a critical tool to diagnose this disease early.

Thank you for hearing this important bill and for your work representing the people of Oregon. I ask for your support for HB 3421.

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