

Testimony in support of the Alzheimer's Respite Program and Governor's Budget
Recommendation
Appropriations Committee
March 4, 2011

Senator Harp and Representative Walker, and members of the committee, sometimes Alzheimer's disease can be written off with detachment, looked over because it seems far away as the disease only for the elderly — but the reality is that it is more relevant than ever. According to statistics from the report *Generation Alzheimer's*, over 5 million Americans currently have the devastating disease — one that not only kills, but also snuffs out the essence of patients — and this number will only skyrocket. It is projected that by 2050, this number will grow up to 13.4 million. And along with the patients, the disease will impact many more people, most significantly family members and caretakers.

Just in Connecticut, over 70,000 people suffer from Alzheimer's. And for these patients, there are approximately 125,000 caregivers. Over 49,000 of the 70,000 patients (~70%) are cared for by family and friends. I haven't personally had to live through a family member suffering from Alzheimer's, but I can just image how heart-wrenching it would be to live with a loved one experiencing this memory-robbing disease and how much of a comfort, relief, and blessing it would be to know that there are resources to keep him/her at home. Thus, the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program is an extremely valuable lifeline for families and funding should be continued to support the crucial cause. In addition, the program would also be financially advantageous because if these 49,000 patients started flooding nursing homes, it would be straining — to say the least. Current estimations of nursing home costs also seem to be much more expensive than the current program.

In addition, I believe that it is also important to increase funding for Alzheimer's research due to the disparity of governmental funding. According to Ronald Peterson, director of the Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, over \$5.6 billion a year is spent on cancer research, over \$1 billion on heart disease — but only \$500 million is currently funded to support Alzheimer's research. Ironically, he notes that Alzheimer's is what is going to “get most of us” in the near future. With no cure, and not even a definitive test for the devastating disease, it is evident that there needs to change.

Ultimately, we need to sustain the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program and increase research funding to combat this disease with success. Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this testimony.

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