

Dear Senator Harp, Rep. Walker and Appropriation Committee members,

We are a group of undergraduates at Yale University and have recently founded the Yale Undergraduate Alzheimer's Disease Initiative in collaboration with the Connecticut Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. Our group is a wholly student-run organization that strives to enhance student knowledge of the disease. Alzheimer's presents an imminent public health threat, and it is more important than ever that we mobilize support to face the ailment. To this end, we have and continue to work on directing educational and advocacy campaigns, inviting speakers, and hosting expert panels in an effort to increase awareness of the disease not only at Yale, but throughout the state of Connecticut.

According to statistics provided by the Alzheimer's Association, this currently incurable disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. There are currently more than 5.4 million people suffering from Alzheimer's disease in the United States, and this number is projected to exceed 16 million by the year 2050. In 2010, the health care costs of this cruel disease were staggering – over \$120 billion spent by Medicare and Medicaid. This number is estimated to increase to \$805 billion by 2050 – a major crisis.

Alzheimer's affects not only patients, but their families as well with a great emotional, physical, and financial burden. Alzheimer's patients require constant care, and the hardship and stress placed on caregivers leads to an increase of nearly \$8 billion in caregiver health costs each year. Additionally, it has been reported by the Alzheimer's Association that among the caregivers who are also employed full or part time, 61 percent of women and 70 percent of men state that they need to go in late, leave early, and take time off from work due to their responsibilities as caregivers. In 2010, as many as 15 million family members and friends provided care to Alzheimer's patients, and the value of this unpaid care was estimated to be \$202 billion.

The enormous financial and physical challenges posed by Alzheimer's call for increased funding for research into neurological disease. There is an urgent need for researchers to find a cure, especially considering that the number of deaths due to Alzheimer's increased by 66% between 2000 and 2008. However, the funding allocated thus far is not commensurate with the threat posed by this disease. As a comparison, although deaths due to cancer increased by 2% between 2000 and 2008, the funds allocated to cancer research across the NIH in 2011 were estimated at \$5.8 billion versus only \$450 million for Alzheimer's research. Given these facts, it is critical to raise public awareness of the urgency of the situation, and give due attention and financial support to efforts combatting Alzheimer's disease.

As college undergraduates, indirect victims of the disease, and concerned citizens, we thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue. We were excited to learn of recent promises by the president and congress to dedicate increased funding to Alzheimer's research, caregiver support, and awareness campaigns, and hope that you too will support our effort to combat this devastating disease. Despite recent victories, now is not the time to become complacent. Alzheimer's remains the only top 10 cause of death in the United States without a way to prevent, cure, or even slow its progression. We would be happy to meet and discuss the disease as well as your position on future efforts. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Yale Undergraduate Alzheimer's Disease Initiative, William Zhang, President