

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 7, 2017

The Honorable Eric D. Hargan
Acting Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Hargan,

As the Acting Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which implements the ongoing National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA), we urge you to address the effects of Alzheimer's and related dementia, particularly on women. Dementia costs Americans time – healthy years from their lives – and money, in the form of care, lost productivity and medical needs. In 2017, the direct costs of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia will be an estimated \$259 billion. Much of this is privately funded by American families, unpaid caregivers and people living with the condition.

Overall, women bear the greatest burden of this cost. Dementia affects more women than men, and while we do not know why, we know that two-thirds of the 5 million seniors with Alzheimer's disease are women. Additionally, two-thirds of family caregivers are women, and 19% have left paying jobs to provide unpaid care for a loved one. So, we, as women leaders in Congress and as supporters of women, are making fighting back against dementia a national priority.

In order to respond quickly and decisively to Alzheimer's and related dementias, we ask that NAPA prioritize the following items in its ongoing summits and planning process:

Funding for research: There is bi-partisan consensus that funding our National Institutes of Health is critical for curing and treating our nation's worst diseases. Alzheimer's is perhaps our greatest challenge today - there is no disease-modifying treatment and no drug has been approved by the FDA for more than a decade. Greater NIH funding for Alzheimer's research is critical to finding a cure.

Sex-Based Research: With 4.2 million women suffering today, sex-based studies must be a research priority and studies should be designed, analyzed and reported by sex. In the case of women of Latina or African-American backgrounds, differences in prevalence are particularly stark¹. We must understand the communities at greatest risk for dementia and ensure that future treatments are available and accessible.

¹ Health Disparities and Alzheimer's Disease. (2012, December 20). Retrieved June 13, 2017, from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/2011-2012-alzheimers-disease-progress-report/health-disparities-and>

Economic Impact: We must mend social support, medical, and workplace systems to ease the costs of dementia to the US economy, the government, and to individuals and families.

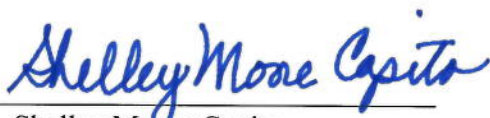
Diagnosis and Treatment: People with dementia need to be diagnosed as early as possible to support clinical research, receive critical care interventions and to help them plan for the future. Early detection must be made a priority to health care providers, with Medicare policies leading the way.

Brain Health: Reducing the risk of dementia could prevent nearly 1/3 of cases², and vastly reduce the associated costs. Public health education and leadership are needed to raise awareness of what can be done to reduce dementia risk.

We urge you to join us in meeting the Alzheimer's crisis head-on. Together we can improve the lives of millions of American women by reducing the high cost of dementia and better supporting the needs of those with dementia and their caregivers.

As you consider these requests and the impact Alzheimer's disease has on women, we would request that you provide a response to us detailing how the Department will address these concerns in subsequent iterations of the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease, including specific strategies and milestones you will take to address the burden of Alzheimer's on women.

Sincerely,



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

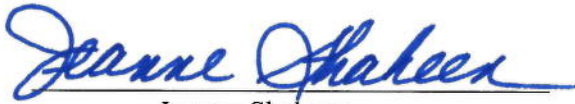


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

² Norton S, Matthews FE, Barnes DE, Yaffe K, Brayne C. Potential for primary prevention of Alzheimer's disease: an analysis of population-based data. *Lancet Neurol.* 2014;13:788-94.



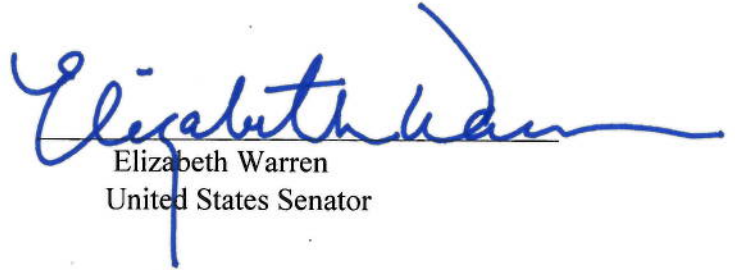
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator




Lisa A. Murkowski
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator