

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEEDS OF ALZHEIMER POPULATION ADDRESSED  
IN HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATION**

**Washington, DC (March 22, 2010)** – As the leading care, research and advocacy organization for Alzheimer's disease, the Alzheimer's Association applauds Congress for including significant provisions in the final health care reform legislation to address the health concerns of a growing Alzheimer population. While the Association did not endorse any specific health care reform legislation, the Association did work to ensure that all bills under consideration contained the strongest provisions possible to address the particular challenges and concerns of the more than 5 million Americans with Alzheimer's. Several provisions in the final measure would deliver substantial benefits to those with Alzheimer's and other dementias and to their caregivers.

"Many aspects of the final health care reform legislation will greatly serve the Alzheimer community," said Robert Egge, Vice President of the Alzheimer's Association's Public Policy and Advocacy Division. "We are particularly pleased with those elements that improve the health care delivery system through the promotion of care coordination, transitional care, and long-term care services."

Most of the Alzheimer population has one or more other serious medical condition. Coordinated care is critical because so many with Alzheimer's are also managing multiple chronic conditions, like coronary heart disease or diabetes. Cognitive impairment greatly complicates the management of these other conditions, resulting in more hospitalizations, longer hospital stays, and higher costs than for those with these same conditions but not Alzheimer's disease. In fact, Medicare costs are 3 times higher than for those without Alzheimer's disease, while Medicaid costs are 9 times higher.

Elements in the final health care reform legislation would begin to address these issues:

- Alzheimer families will be helped by the creation of a national voluntary insurance program, known as the CLASS Act, which provides benefits for long-term care services and support, such as respite care, home care aides, and accessible transportation. This new insurance program will help individuals with Alzheimer's disease to remain as independent as possible within their homes and communities for as long as they can and is a great first step in addressing long-term care issues and in assisting families.
- Creating a new demonstration project, known as the Innovation Center, to examine ways to promote care coordination in the Medicare program, including for individuals

with Alzheimer's and other dementias. "Care coordination is a process for ensuring effective communication among medical and community care providers and connecting an individual and their family with the services they need," Egge said. "The new Innovation Center will pilot new programs and identify which programs work best for individuals with dementia."

- Establishing a Medicare pilot program to provide transitional care to seniors at a high risk, including those with cognitive impairment, of reentering a hospital. "Cognitive impairment due to Alzheimer's and other causes increases the complexity of care transitions and post-acute care, resulting in increased risk for medication errors and hospital readmissions," said Egge. "Alzheimer families need assistance with planning and managing discharge and post-acute care, including arranging and monitoring in-home medical treatment and supportive services."

The Association commends the fact that the legislation takes steps to address individuals with younger-onset Alzheimer's disease – those under the age of 65 – who have a difficult time getting and keeping private health insurance. Currently, almost 29 percent of individuals with younger-onset Alzheimer's disease have no health insurance, causing a great financial burden on their families. The health care reform legislation would make health insurance available to those with pre-existing conditions, and there would also be guaranteed issue and renewability. "We are glad to see provisions ensuring that individuals with younger-onset Alzheimer's can more easily obtain, maintain and retain health insurance," said Egge.

The Association is pleased with how these various provisions included in the final health care reform measure would benefit the growing number of Alzheimer families. But ultimately solving the Alzheimer crisis – with its far reaching impact on families, business, Medicare, Medicaid and the nation as a whole – will require investment in research to develop effective treatments that prevent, stop or cure the disease. While health care reform was never designed to address this challenge, it does include an important step called the Cures Acceleration Network. This \$500 million research program is aimed at developing treatments and cures for high need diseases, such as Alzheimer's, with an emphasis on bridging the gap between laboratory discoveries and actual treatments.

#### **Alzheimer's Association**

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

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