



THE BRAINS BEHIND SAVING YOURS.™

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Carly Vendemia, 202-683-3244, [carly.vendemia@qorvismsl.com](mailto:carly.vendemia@qorvismsl.com)

**B. SMITH, ENTREPRENEUR LIVING WITH ALZHEIMER'S,  
ADDRESSES SENATE AGING COMMITTEE HEARING ON  
NEED TO INVEST IN ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH**  
*Hearing Held While 1,000 Advocates on Capitol Hill for the  
Alzheimer's Association Advocacy Forum*

**WASHINGTON, D.C., March 25, 2015** – Earlier today, the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging convened a hearing titled “The Fight Against Alzheimer’s Disease: Are We on Track to a Treatment by 2025?” The hearing featured personal testimony from **Dr. Ronald Petersen** of the Mayo Clinic, a leading Alzheimer’s researcher and former Alzheimer’s Association national board member; **B. Smith**, former model, restaurateur, retailer, author and actor, who has been diagnosed with younger-onset Alzheimer’s disease; and Smith’s husband, **Dan Gasby**.

When speaking to the committee, chaired by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and ranking member Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Smith said, “I’ve been a model and a TV personality, but now I have the most important job. I’m here because I have Alzheimer’s.” Gasby shared his experience the evening before among 1,000 fellow advocates from across the nation at the Alzheimer’s Association National Alzheimer’s Dinner. “What I saw there last night was a team... We’re at the tipping point. We’re going to push this over,” said Gasby.

Gasby made a direct appeal to the committee for more federal support to fight Alzheimer’s in the words of Kanye West and Jay-Z: “The ‘pain ain’t cheap’ for the 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer’s... We spend so little on this disease that will affect your family or someone you know.”

“If we are going to prevent Alzheimer’s from becoming the defining disease of the next generation, we must invest in research now,” said Sen. Collins.

Sen. McCaskill put it simply: “Not funding research is dumb because it’s going to cost us money. Refusing to fund care is cruel.” Dr. Petersen confirmed, “We cannot wait until a more convenient time to invest in Alzheimer’s disease... The cost to society is unsustainable.”

-more-

The hearing coincided with the 27th annual Alzheimer's Association Advocacy Forum, which brought advocates from all 50 states to Capitol Hill in a wave of purple to appeal directly to their members of Congress for increased federal support to fight Alzheimer's disease, specifically \$300 million in additional NIH funding. At several points during the hearing, the cost of Alzheimer's to the nation was discussed. As the most expensive disease in the nation, Alzheimer's will cost \$226 billion in 2015, with projections to reach \$1.1 trillion by 2050.

Alzheimer's Association advocates also asked their members of Congress to sponsor the bipartisan Health Outcomes, Planning, and Education (HOPE) for Alzheimer's Act (H.R. 1559/S. 857) introduced today. The HOPE for Alzheimer's Act will ensure newly diagnosed Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers receive comprehensive care planning services and will require their diagnosis to be documented in their medical record. It will also help inform health care providers about what steps should be taken following a diagnosis, which will enhance assistance for people with Alzheimer's and their caregivers.

“Under Sens. Collins and McCaskill's leadership, today's hearing builds on the momentum to make Alzheimer's a national priority,” said Robert Egge, chief public policy officer at the Alzheimer's Association. “We call on Congress to increase funding for Alzheimer's disease research by \$300 million and to support the families currently facing this fatal disease with the HOPE for Alzheimer's Act. Alzheimer's is the only leading cause of death among the top 10 in the U.S. without a way to prevent, stop or even slow its progression. We must change this.”

In addition to Smith, Gasby and Dr. Petersen, the committee heard testimony from a number of experts, advocates, patients and caregivers, including:

- **Richard J. Hodes, M.D.**, director of the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.
- **Kimberly Stemley**, Alzheimer's Association advocate and chief financial officer of Rx Outreach, St. Louis, Missouri.
- **Heidi R. Weirman, M.D.**, division director of geriatrics, Maine Medical Center, Portland, Maine.

For more information on Alzheimer's disease, visit [alz.org](http://alz.org).

### **Alzheimer's Association®**

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's 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 [alz.org](http://alz.org).

###