

**STATEMENT OF  
SENATOR SUSAN COLLINS  
SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING**

***“THE NATIONAL PLAN TO ADDRESS ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE: ARE WE ON TRACK  
TO 2025”***

**APRIL 24, 2013**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing to examine the tremendous toll that Alzheimer’s disease takes on our nation and to assess the progress since the enactment of the National Alzheimer’s Project Act in 2011. Along with former Senator Evan Bayh, I am proud to have been the sponsor of that law, known as NAPA.

Alzheimer’s is a terrible disease that exacts a tremendous personal and economic toll on both the individual and the family. As someone whose family has experienced the pain of Alzheimer’s many times, I know that there is no more helpless feeling than to watch the progression of this devastating disease. It is an agonizing experience to look into the eyes of a loved one only to receive a confused look in return. It is equally painful to witness the emotional and physical damage inflicted on family caregivers, exhausted by an endless series of “36 hour” days.

And my family is by no means alone. An estimated 5.2 million Americans have Alzheimer’s disease, more than double the number in 1980. Based on the current trajectory, as many as 16 million Americans over the age of 65 will have Alzheimer’s disease by 2050.

Moreover, in addition to the human suffering it causes, Alzheimer’s costs the United States more than \$200 billion a year, including \$142 billion in costs to Medicare and Medicaid. This price tag will increase exponentially as the baby boom generation ages. If nothing is done to slow or stop the disease, Alzheimer’s will cost the United States an astonishing \$20 trillion over the next 40 years, according to the Alzheimer’s Association.

It is estimated that nearly one in two of the baby boomers reaching 85 will develop Alzheimer’s. As a consequence, chances are that members of the baby boom generation will either be spending their golden years with Alzheimer’s or caring for someone who has it. In many ways, Alzheimer’s has become the defining disease of my generation.

A strong and sustained research effort is our best tool to slow the progression and ultimately prevent the onset of this tragic disease. If we fail to change the current trajectory of Alzheimer’s disease, our country will not only face a mounting national health crisis, but an economic one as well.

Despite all the alarming statistics, until now, there has been no national strategy to defeat Alzheimer’s and our efforts to combat the disease have lacked coordination and focus. That is why the National Alzheimer’s Project Act – or NAPA – creates a strategic national plan for combating Alzheimer’s disease.

This National Plan, which will be updated annually, will help us focus our efforts and accelerate our progress toward better treatments, a means of prevention, and ultimately, even a cure for this devastating disease.

The annual review process required by the law is intended to help us to answer the simple question – have we made satisfactory progress this year in the fight against Alzheimer’s?

And that is why we are here today. The primary goal of the first National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease released last May was “to prevent and effectively treat Alzheimer’s disease by 2025.” It is my understanding that the next version of the National Plan will be released next month. So this seems to be a perfect time for a progress check.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing. Issues related to Alzheimer’s are near and dear to my heart, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

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