

Ranking Member Tim Scott's Opening Statement

Hearing: Taking Aim at Alzheimer's: Frontline Perspectives and Caregiver Challenges

Date: 5/20/21

Thank you Chairman Casey and thank you for your commitment to such an important issue. And to those of you who are joining us today, we are so thankful that you're here, and we are so thankful that you have led the fight for all of us on this really important issue.

There's no doubt that the COVID impact on Alzheimer's and the caregivers was devastating, and frankly I think about folks in my home state of South Carolina, Karen Sheppard of Moncks Corner who takes care of her mother. Her mother was diagnosed eight years ago. Before COVID, she used to have a private sitter who would come help out some, so she could go to her own doctors' appointments. When businesses started shutting down, she lost her respite care.

During the first wave of COVID, we saw Alzheimer's and dementia deaths increased by 18% nationwide. Far, far too many people. Last month, I along with 23 Senators sent a bi-partisan letter to Secretary Becerra asking him to target the remaining 23 billion dollars of COVID-19 relief to people with Alzheimer's. Under the previous administration, and two years prior, funding for Alzheimer's increased by 420%, from 595 million dollars in 2015 to 3.1 billion in 2021.

Linda Tolbert, from Greenville, South Carolina, who lost her husband to this disease at the age of 56, pointed out and I love this comment and chairman Casey would love it as well, "This is not a red issue, or a blue issue, this is truly a purple issue." it's the color of the tie that I am wearing today, and frankly it's what we both know that this is one of the reasons why this hearing is one of the more important hearings we will have all year.

We are bringing not a partisan coalition together, we are bringing the American coalition together, the American family is focused on an issue that we know devastating families throughout this country, and by doing so we believe that by bringing more attention to this important topic that we will be able to help bring more resources and more expertise to the table, and we are so thankful that we have the host of panels, and experts that we have to talk about an issue, that they may be personally impacted by and that they continue to strive for solutions to help the next wave of caregivers and the next wave of folks impacted by that.

For that, we are eternally grateful for the experts that we have. I'll say that, when you think about Mr. Chairman, as we noted in our last hearing, nearly half of all the people with Down Syndrome will develop Alzheimer's, and nearly one third will be by the age

of 50. 70% of women with prenatal diagnosis of Down Syndrome have abortions, and I thank you for recognizing our shared commitment to improving the lives of people with Down Syndrome and Alzheimer's.

When it comes to doing the best with what we have, South Carolina is truly a trail blazer. In 1988, South Carolina launched the nation's first Alzheimer's disease registry, which informs clinical research and planning for medical and social services. While we were leading the fight we are also in the trenches, South Carolina has the sixth highest death rate for Alzheimer's in our nation, sixth!

Patty Younts of Pawley's Island, in 2012, her husband Howard was diagnosed with a rare Alzheimer's disease that causes severe visual impairment. He sees the world as if he is looking through a broken mirror. Patty is an advocate and a caregiver, she and Howard just celebrated their 35th anniversary. Happy Anniversary, Patty.

People like Karen, Linda, Patty, our witnesses today, and all of you joining virtually give us hope. You give me hope.

The Alzheimer's Association says the first survivor of Alzheimer's is still out there, and I know they are right. I believe today's hearing will help us hit the accelerator in that direction. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and working with them to find that first survivor and so many more. Thank you, Chairman.