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United States Senate

January 26, 2018

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Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services
% Rohini Khillan
HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
Room 424E, Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington DC, 20201

Dear Members of the Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services:

I write to encourage the Advisory Council to empanel experts to develop recommendations for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Advisory Council to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of care provided to individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementias in acute care settings. With more than five million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease – a number that is expected to triple in the coming decades¹ – it is imperative that these individuals and their families receive proper treatment throughout the continuum of care.

More than 14 million Americans aged 65 and older are hospitalized each year, and of those patients, roughly more than six million experience some form of cognitive impairment during their hospital stay.² Complicating matters, an estimated 50 percent of individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementias lack a formal diagnosis in their medical records.² This presents challenges to ensuring these individuals receive dementia-capable care in an acute care system, especially considering that the absence of a diagnosis or detection of cognitive impairment increases the risk of delirium, readmission, and even death.²

As part of a 2014 law to help address dementia-capable acute care at the state level, Massachusetts created an Alzheimer's and Related Dementias Acute Care Advisory Committee ("Committee"). The Committee had three goals: identifying and communicating the challenges and opportunities for providing optimal care to persons with dementia in acute care settings, providing options for hospitals to improve the quality of care for the patient and the caregiver/provider experience, and offering strategies to improve the cost-effectiveness of care.³ In response to these goals, the Committee proposed a number of recommendations to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of care provided to individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementias in acute care settings. Specifically, the Committee proposed that the top three

¹ <https://www.alz.org/facts/>

² http://preview.alz.org/wv/in_my_community_104039.asp

³ <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/11/ardacac-recommendations-report-2017.pdf>

recommendations included in the report become standard of care in most Massachusetts hospitals.³

The Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services has a history of empaneling experts to thoroughly examine issues uniquely impacting individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementias and their caregivers. For example, recognizing the unique care needed by the one million persons in the later stages of dementia, the Advisory Council convened an Advanced Dementia Expert Panel. The Expert Panel reviewed research, innovative practices, and policy pertinent to the care of persons with advanced dementia and their families, and in 2015, made recommendations to HHS and the Advisory Council on how to improve care for this vulnerable population.⁴ Their comprehensive set of recommendations related to access, workforce, quality, system reforms, and examples of high-quality dementia care.⁴

Given the challenges that persons with dementia and their families face in acute care settings, I encourage the Advisory Council to convene an Alzheimer's and Related Dementias Acute Care Expert Panel. This panel, which should have similar goals to that of the Committee in Massachusetts, should ultimately provide recommendations to HHS and the Advisory Council on strategies to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of care for individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementias in acute care settings.

Thank you for your attention to my request.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

⁴ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/advisory-council-january-2015-meeting-presentation-advanced-dementia-panel>