

March 10, 2021

To: Chair Dexter, Vice-Chair Hayden and Members of the House Committee on Health Care, House Subcommittee On COVID-19

From: Sara Kofman, Alzheimer's Association Oregon & Southwest Washington Chapter

Subject: Support for HB 2327 with amendments

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2327, legislation to improve long-term care emergency preparedness and response.

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support, and research. We work in strategic partnership with our sister organization, the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM), to make Alzheimer's a national priority on behalf of the more than six million Americans and 69,000 Oregonians living with Alzheimer's. Together, the Alzheimer's Association and AIM advocate for policies to fight Alzheimer's disease, including increased investment in research, improved care and support, and advancement of approaches to reduce the risk of developing dementia.

As of early February, it was estimated that more than 152,000 residents and employees of nursing homes and long-term care facilities have died from COVID-19. There is no question that long-term care communities are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis across the nation and in our own state. Residents with dementia are particularly susceptible to COVID-19 due to their typical age, their significantly increased likelihood of coexisting chronic conditions, and the community nature of long-term care settings. In Oregon an estimated 47 percent of residents in community-based care are living with dementia.

The Alzheimer's Association appreciates that HB 2327 aims to address gaps in emergency preparedness that were exposed during the current pandemic. There are crucial provisions in HB 2327 that are consistent with many of the Alzheimer's Association's COVID-19 policy recommendations for long-term care: [Improving the State and Federal Response to COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Settings](#). These recommendations focus on ensuring all long-term care facilities have full and ongoing access to needed PPE, testing equipment, infection control, training and external support. Similar to provisions included in HB 2327, the Alzheimer's Association recommends that long-term care communities have a plan to address and prevent social isolation of residents during emergencies and advocates for the creation of a Statewide Long-Term Care Emergency Response Task Force. We are pleased that the Long-Term Care Emergency Preparedness and Response Team that would be created by HB 2327 provides a voice for consumers, providers and professional caregivers to identify pressing issues and implement solutions to help protect vulnerable populations, including people with dementia, in Oregon's long-term care settings. Further, we applaud efforts to apply a health equity lens in any recommendations that come from the Long-Term Care Emergency Preparedness and Response Team.

It is imperative that our state take stock of the lessons learned and advance policies that will help protect vulnerable populations in long-term care during the current pandemic and beyond. The passage of HB 2327 is the first step in doing so. For these reasons and more, the Alzheimer's Association supports the passage of HB 2327. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Please contact Sara Kofman at skofman@alz.org with any questions.