

May 13, 2021

To: Chair Prusak and Members of the House Committee on Health Care
From: Sara Kofman, Alzheimer's Association Oregon & Southwest Washington Chapter
Subject: Support for SB 199 A

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 199 A, legislation regarding advance directives in Oregon.

Alzheimer's is a progressive and fatal brain disease that affects more than six million Americans. An estimated 69,000 Oregonians aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's. A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is life-changing. Research has shown that taking full advantage of available treatments and care and support options allows people with dementia and their families the opportunity to maintain their quality of life. This includes participating in decisions about living options, legal and financial matters and end-of-life care. The Alzheimer's Association encourages people with Alzheimer's disease to complete an advance directive and talk with their loved ones and physicians about their choices.

SB 199 A will update Oregon's current advance directive form in a manner that encourages Oregon families to have and document valuable discussions about their health care values and wishes. Engaging in these types of conversations early in the disease process is of the utmost importance for people with dementia. It ensures that their wishes are known and that their values and beliefs will be carried out when they are no longer able to speak for themselves. The Alzheimer's Association appreciates the work of the Advance Directive Adoption Committee.

Making medical decisions about treatment remains the right of the person with dementia until they no longer have the capacity to make this decision. At that time, medical decisions are made by the person's legally-defined surrogate. A person with dementia has the legal right to request medical treatments or refuse medical treatments. This right can be asserted through their advance directive. It is important to respect the autonomy of individuals with dementia and appreciate that they have choices in their end-of-life care.

As people with late-stage Alzheimer's disease near end of life and are no longer able to make their own decisions, families and loved ones must make choices on the person's behalf. When advance directives are in place, family members and loved ones can take solace in knowing that they are respecting the person's values and wishes while maintaining dignity. SB 199 A is one way to ensure that more Oregonians, including individuals with dementia, will have a way to give guidance on the health care decisions they want made on their behalf.

For these reasons and more, the Alzheimer's Association supports the passage of SB 199 A. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Please contact Sara Kofman at skofman@alz.org or 503.416.0202 with any questions.