



February 8, 2023

To: Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

Re: SB 796, the Oregon Memory Net

I am writing today to provide my strong, enthusiastic support for SB 796. I have been a neurologist working in the OHSU Alzheimer Disease Center for 30 years. I regularly evaluate people with possible dementia and their families.

The Oregon Memory Net is a modest investment to support the early detection and diagnosis of dementia. With more than 69,000 Oregonians living with Alzheimer's and growing, and with many more Oregonians directly impacted by the disease, we must take steps to address this public health crisis. An early and accurate diagnosis is a critical component to this challenge and has numerous benefits:

- Opportunities to engage in strategies to improve brain health (e.g., exercise, diet)
- Adequate care partner support
- Appropriate long term planning management
- State benefits that can promote aging in place
- Better management of co-occurring chronic conditions
- Access to support services for both the individual and caregivers
- Access to available treatments and participation in clinical trials
- Ample time for advance care and financial planning
- Opportunities to build a care team
- Better safety, as families can ensure their environments are prepared for progression of the dementia
- Gives the person with dementia time to focus on what is important

In addition to the direct benefit to those impacted, an early and accurate diagnosis combined with comprehensive care planning will directly benefit the state budget and help to alleviate some of the other challenges we are facing in our health care system broadly. Nationally, if those in the "mild cognitive impairment" stage were all diagnosed, the country would save an estimated \$7 trillion in health and long-term care expenditures (2018, Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures). Appropriately diagnosing and managing dementia and supporting family caregivers' well-being has been shown to reduce emergency room utilization and delay entry into long term care settings, both of which are expensive and challenged by capacity issues.

Across the country, many states have taken action to support early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's and other dementias, including Georgia, Wisconsin, Florida, California, New York, Texas, Montana, and Virginia. Oregon must do the same. With 200+ day wait times for diagnostic services in Portland (where access is greatest), it is essential that the state step up and provide these investments which will pay off with cost savings down the road.

The Oregon Memory Net would establish a state partnership with the only NIA-designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in Oregon (OHSU) to establish a Memory Assessment Clinic outside the Portland-Metro area. This model is taken from the very successful Georgia Memory Net program, which has become a national model. It is efficient, easily scalable, and proven.

Please support SB 796 to establish the Oregon Memory Net to support Oregonians affected by dementia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry S. Oken", written in a cursive style.

Barry S. Oken, MD, PhD
Professor, Depts of Neurology, Behavioral Neuroscience, & Biomed. Engineering
Associate Director, OHSU Alzheimer's Disease Research Center