

## THE ALZHEIMER'S BENEFICIARY AND CAREGIVER SUPPORT ACT

Sponsored by Senators Shelley Moore Capito (WV) and Senator Debbie Stabenow (MI)

Today, more than 15 million Americans are serving as a family caregiver to a loved one living with Alzheimer's or dementia, providing nearly 18 billion hours of unpaid care annually. These loving but largely untrained and unsupported family caregivers face many challenges, including high levels of caregiver stress and depression. In addition, they face declines in physical, mental and emotional health and financial shortfalls driven by both the costs associated with such care as well as the lost wages that are commonplace for caregivers of this population. Unfortunately, these immense challenges often lead to an Alzheimer's patient's premature entry into costly long-term care.

To address this reality, the *Alzheimer's Beneficiary and Caregiver Support Act* would test the efficacy of providing Alzheimer's Disease caregiver support services in delaying or reducing the use of institutionalized care for Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's Disease or a related dementia. Mounting evidence suggests that targeted support services directed to these informal family caregivers may help the caregiver prevent or mitigate these challenges and help keep an Alzheimer's patient in the home setting for longer periods of time.

The *Alzheimer's Beneficiary and Caregiver Support Act* is modeled after the New York University Caregiver Intervention (NYUCI), as well as versions of that program replicated across the country and the world, including at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The NYUCI consists of individual and family counseling, participation in a caregiver support group, and ad-hoc counseling via telephone for caregivers and families to help them deal with the many challenges described above. Over more than 25 years, this program has been shown to delay long-term care admission by more than a year and-a-half and to improve caregiver health and well-being.

Given this promising body of evidence and in light of the mounting cost and health burdens related to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias on federal health programs, it is essential such an intervention is fully examined and its potential impact of on the Medicare and Medicaid programs determined. The *Alzheimer's Beneficiary and Caregiver Support Act* will provide us with these needed answers.

### SECTION BY SECTION SUMMARY

**Section 1. Short Title.** Allows the Act to be cited as the "Alzheimer's Beneficiary and Caregiver Support Act".

**Section 2. Testing of Medicare and Medicaid Coverage of Alzheimer's Disease Caregiver Support Services.** This provision requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services (Secretary) to test the efficacy of providing Alzheimer's disease caregiver support services in delaying or reducing the use of institutionalized care for Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. It specifically defines the terms Alzheimer's disease caregiver support services'; applicable Medicare beneficiary; eligible professional; and family caregiver. In addition, it requires the Secretary to establish payment amounts for Alzheimer's disease caregiver support services.