

**SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING**

*“Finding a Cure: Assessing Progress Toward the Goal of Ending Alzheimer’s by 2025”*

April 6, 2016

Ranking Member Claire McCaskill

Opening Statement

Thank you Chairman Collins. I would like to take a moment to applaud your leadership on this Committee and on behalf of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and those who care for them. I would also like to thank the many advocates who are were with us today, from all across the country; your advocacy is valuable and we are so glad you could join us for today’s hearing. Of course, I have to give a special welcome to our Missouri delegation that traveled all this way to have their voices heard on this important issue.

As the people in this room know all too well, Alzheimer’s is a disease that wreaks havoc on not only the patient’s life, but on the lives of that person’s family as well. With the aging of the baby boom generation, the number of Americans with Alzheimer’s will increase dramatically unless we find a way to prevent or effectively treat the disease. If nothing is done to change the trajectory of this disease, costs are projected to increase to over \$1 trillion by 2050, with Medicare and Medicaid paying the vast majority. Federal and state governments are already paying a large portion of the costs attributed to Alzheimer’s disease. It is estimated that one out of every three Medicaid dollars is spent on long-term care, much of that for people with Alzheimer’s disease. I know in my state of Missouri, that number is even higher. And it’s not just costs to the government, individual families are bearing much of the cost as well. A new study done by the Alzheimer’s Association, found that on average, families are spending \$5,000 out of pocket per year to care for their loved ones with Alzheimer’s. These numbers aren’t sustainable for our federal and state governments, and they’re certainly not sustainable for our families.

Families are carrying so much of the burden of Alzheimer's disease. I'd like to take a moment to recognize the family caregivers, who are truly the unsung heroes of Alzheimer's disease. There are more than 15 million caregivers for people with Alzheimer's disease and last year, they provided over 18 billion hours of care for their loved ones. That is an incredible amount of work.

I'd like to introduce one of our witnesses on today's panel whose organization is providing critical support for caregivers in my home state of Missouri. Lisa Baron is the Founder and Executive Director of Memory Care Home Solutions, based in St. Louis. Memory Care Home Solutions works to extend and improve time at home for people with dementia by providing in-home training and support for family caregivers. Lisa's organization primarily serves families with the most need and offers their services free of charge. The model of Lisa's organization not only helps seniors to remain in their homes, but also provides critical assistance to family caregivers who are so often overlooked. I look forward to hearing Lisa's testimony and learning more about the interesting work her organization is doing in the St. Louis area.

We must continue to provide resources and support to help those with Alzheimer's disease and those who care for them; but if we don't also invest more in medical research, this disease will bankrupt not only our government but also our families. I was very pleased to see that last year's budget increased funds for NIH to research Alzheimer's disease. Still, Alzheimer's disease receives funding that is much lower than other diseases with similar outcomes. I can't think of another disease that is more deserving of increased research dollars, than Alzheimer's. The Chairman of the Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services has testified before Congress that we must devote at least \$2 billion a year to Alzheimer's research in order to meet the goal of preventing and effectively treating the disease

by 2025. Government investment in medical research has long made America a beacon to the world for medical advancement. I hope that we continue to increase our investment in NIH research for Alzheimer's disease.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from our distinguished panel of witnesses about how we can confront this looming challenge and our plan for reaching an effective treatment by 2025. Thank you again, Chairman Collins, for holding this important hearing. And thank you to our witnesses and advocates, for taking the time to be here today.