



The Honorable Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Menendez
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

May 12, 2020

Dear Senators Collins and Menendez:

On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM), including our nationwide network of advocates, thank you for your continued leadership on issues and legislation important to Americans living with Alzheimer's and other dementia and to their caregivers. In addition, thank you for working together in a bipartisan manner to introduce the Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act. We are proud to support this important legislation which would require the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop best practice materials to assist professionals supporting victims of abuse living with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

The burden of Alzheimer's on individuals and families continues to grow. More Americans are living with the disease – there are more than 5 million seniors age 65 and older living with Alzheimer's in 2020. By 2050, that number is expected to rise to nearly 14 million. These individuals are at heightened risk for experiencing elder abuse. Elder abuse is the intentional or negligent act by any person that causes serious harm to an older adult. This harm may be physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and/or financial. As many as 62 percent of persons living with dementia experience psychological abuse and as many as one-fourth have been physically abused. Additionally, one study found that 60 percent of elderly victims of sexual abuse have cognitive impairment. Nearly one-third (31 percent) of adults with dementia have experienced more than one form of abuse.

With the current COVID-19 pandemic and given the growing population of persons with dementia, police, firefighters, emergency personnel, and social workers will increasingly encounter these vulnerable individuals, and working with them can be fundamentally different from working with other older victims of abuse or exploitation. For example, individuals living with dementia often have difficulty understanding or explaining situations. Common behaviors experienced by individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementias could be viewed as uncooperative, disruptive, or combative unless professionals have training on the unique needs of someone living with dementia. The Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act addresses this need and will improve interactions between justice personnel and our constituents. This bipartisan bill is consistent with the *National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease* and will help ensure greater success for DOJ's efforts to combat elder abuse, neglect, and financial fraud targeting seniors.

We look forward to working with you to get this important bill signed into law. If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Robert Egge
Chief Public Policy Officer
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs
Alzheimer's Association