

**Opening Statement**  
**Senator Bob Casey, Ranking Member**  
**“The Arc of Alzheimer’s: From Preventing Cognitive Decline in Americans to  
Assuring Quality Care for those Living with the Disease”**

Chairman Collins, thank you for calling this hearing and for your dedication on this issue.

It is a topic that touches nearly every family in some way. Whether it is a parent, a grandparent, a sibling, a friend, or a neighbor, everyone in this room knows what this fight is all about.

Our witnesses today come here as leaders in that fight from all across the country. I will soon have an opportunity to introduce Phyllis Gallagher from Frackville, Pennsylvania, which is not far from my hometown of Scranton. Phyllis cares for her husband, John, who began showing signs of early-onset Alzheimer’s at the age of just 49. I am very grateful that she is willing and able to join us today to provide her testimony.

It is also an honor to have Maria Shriver here with us today to help raise awareness about the issues families like her family and the Gallagher family face every day.

Alzheimer’s disease severely impacts both the lives of those who are diagnosed with it and the lives of those who care for them. In the state of Pennsylvania, 270,000 people ages 65 and older currently live with Alzheimer’s disease.

Providing much of the care for these individuals is an enormous but often unseen army of caregivers – including friends, family, and neighbors. In Pennsylvania, an estimated 673,000 people provided unpaid care to a person with Alzheimer’s or a related dementia in 2016. As our population ages, those numbers will only grow, not only in Pennsylvania, but in states across the country.

That is why we are here today – to talk about how we can slow down this disease and ensure that those who develop the disease receive the best medical care and the best support possible.

Scientific research is providing us with new insights into how we can better control the impacts of Alzheimer's disease. For example, we are discovering that physical activity can prepare our brains to fight back against Alzheimer's and to potentially delay the onset of symptoms. Increasingly, we are hearing the experts tell us "What is good for your heart, is good for your brain." We must continue to support research and the quest for interventions that can help us prevent the onset of the disease and one day develop the cure.

Until that time, we must focus on making sure that those who are already living with the disease can get the best care possible. This requires that we have a health care workforce properly trained to address the unique needs of individuals with dementia. This must include care providers across the continuum of care, from primary care providers to nurse practitioners to direct-care workers.

We must also grow the number of doctors specializing in health issues that affect older Americans more broadly. Someone living in an apartment building in Philadelphia or on a farm in Washington County, Pennsylvania must each have access to the care they need when they need it.

All of these efforts will not be enough if we do not also engage the largest component of our caregiving workforce – our family caregivers. Caring for a loved one is emotionally, physically, and financially draining. We know that, and we also know that family caregivers require our support and need to be provided the resources they require to properly care for both their loved ones and themselves.

As the experts will tell us today, we have made progress in each of these areas – research, workforce development, and caregiving. But our work is far from over.

Funding is critical. I firmly oppose any budget proposal that cuts funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) the way that the Trump Administration's budget proposal does. In 2016, we had a breakthrough and had a great bipartisan moment as we moved in the right direction in terms of funding NIH. This budget proposal would be a giant step backward.

I am pleased to join Chairman Collins in the effort to increase Alzheimer's research funding, and I am committed to getting us closer to the \$2 billion per year funding target that experts tell us we need. Over the past several years – with the help of so many people in this room – we have made real progress in increasing funding for Alzheimer's research, but we have a long way to go.

In addition to focusing on these funding priorities, we have to make sure that this issue stays in front of the American people and in front of the leaders here in the Senate and the House. We cannot look at the faces in this audience and the pain and the heartache that so many have suffered as a result of this terrible disease and not insist that more has to be done. We need to keep investing in science, keep supporting clinical trials, and keep supporting families.

Let me conclude with a reference to two programs I think are critical to this effort and to supporting families fighting Alzheimer's disease: Medicaid and Medicare. There was recently a health care reform effort in Congress that would have hurt Medicaid terribly. We have to make sure that we stop all such efforts to dismantle Medicaid. We have to step up the fight against Alzheimer's and increase the pace and intensity that we bring to bear, not back down.

I am grateful that you are all here today, and we are grateful for your continuing commitment. I am also grateful for the witness's testimonies as well as for our Chair bringing us together today.

Thank you, Chairman Collins.