

Chairman Bill Nelson opening statement

U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging

Hearing: The National Plan to Address Alzheimer's disease: Are We on Track to 2025?

April 24, 2013

Good afternoon everyone, and thank you for being here today as we discuss efforts to combat Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. overall, and the fifth leading cause of death for those above the age of 65. It is the only cause of death among the top 10 without a way to prevent it, cure it, or even slow its progression.

Today, 1 in 3 seniors dies with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia. And, with the aging of the baby boom generation, the number of Americans age 65 and over with Alzheimer's will increase dramatically unless we find a way to prevent or effectively treat the disease. If nothing is done to reverse this trend, the Alzheimer's Association estimates that up to 16 million Americans will be living with the disease by 2050.

In my own state of Florida, we've seen the number of Alzheimer's cases climb 25 percent over the past 10 years.

In response to these troubling numbers, the Department of Health and Human Services last May released the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease. One of the plan's goals is to effectively prevent and treat the disease by 2025, and today we will be discussing how we can reach that goal.

So, we are up against a clock to make advances in the diagnosis, treatment, and care of those with Alzheimer's. While work is already underway around the country at places like the *University of South Florida's Byrd Alzheimer's Institute* and *Wien Center for Alzheimer's disease and Memory Disorders at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami*, there is still much to be done to meet the goal of finding effective treatments by 2025.

I'd like to take a moment to thank the Alzheimer's Association for their tireless work on behalf of those facing this devastating and debilitating disease. Today, the Alzheimer's Association had over 900 citizen advocates on Capitol Hill, including former Congressman Dennis Moore (D-KS) and his wife Stephene, who are here today. This turnout illustrates just how many people are impacted by this disease and are dedicated to finding a cure.

Like so many illnesses, Alzheimer's places emotional and financial strains not just on the patient, but on the caregivers and the entire family. I'd like to thank country music legend Glenn Campbell and his daughter, Ashley, for being here today to share their story with us.

In addition to the human suffering it causes, Alzheimer's places an enormous financial strain on families, the health care system, and on state and federal budgets. A recent RAND Corporation study found that Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia cost the U.S. more than

either cancer or heart disease. The report also found that each year the condition costs the country between \$159 billion and \$215 billion, a cost that could double by 2040. Dr. Michael Hurd, PhD and senior economist at RAND, was the lead researcher on this study and we are happy to have him with us today.

And, we will also hear from two witnesses on the federal government's efforts to combat Alzheimer's. Don Moulds, Acting Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at HHS, and Ronald Petersen, chair of the National Alzheimer's Advisory Council and Director of the Mayo Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, are with us today and we look forward to hearing their testimonies, as well.

I would now like to turn it over to Senator Collins for her opening remarks.