

**Opening Statement of Senator Herb Kohl**  
**Special Committee on Aging Hearing**  
**The Future of Alzheimer's: Breakthroughs and Challenges**  
**May 14, 2008**

Good morning. Thank you all for being here today. I'd particularly like to express appreciation to our esteemed panel of witnesses for their participation.

Today we will be discussing Alzheimer's, a disease that currently affects over 5 million Americans and their families, and is anticipated to affect millions more as our population ages. Without a cure, or at least some treatment to delay the progression of Alzheimer's, there will be almost a half million new cases of the disease **each year** by 2010.

Clearly, Alzheimer's disease is a growing national crisis and we must commit to addressing it in the most comprehensive way possible. There are enormous costs, both personal and financial. That is why we urgently need to prepare for this mounting epidemic and to determine in what capacity we are able to curb it.

Off the bat, we know there are three things Congress can do—and has done—this year. The first is to increase funding for research, to find cures or treatments that will slow the onset of the disease. The second is to provide support to individuals and their families that are living with the disease. And finally, we can protect those with genetic predisposition to this and other diseases from discrimination by their workplace or insurer.

Legislation exists or will shortly be introduced to address all three of these action items. For instance, the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act aims to increase research funding. The bill, introduced by my colleagues Senator Mikulski, Senator Bond, Senator Clinton and Senator Collins, would double funding for Alzheimer's research at the National Institute for Health (NIH) to \$1.3 billion. This bill passed through the HELP Committee in July of last year.

Recently, I announced my plan to introduce legislation that would offer training and support services to family caregivers. Almost 10 million Americans are caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. These caregivers frequently do the same work as a professional caregiver, but they do so voluntarily and with little or no training or access to broader support services.

Finally, I'm happy to say that the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act (GINA) recently passed the both the House with only one no vote, and the Senate with unanimous support. The bill is currently awaiting the President's signature. Due to recent gains in the areas of gene mapping and genetic testing, this legislation is of particular importance to the Alzheimer's community. As we will hear today, genetic information plays an invaluable role in the early detection and treatment of Alzheimer's

disease. This legislation will protect the right of Americans to seek out genetic testing without fear that the results will be used against them by an employer or insurance provider. Our hope is that this protection will encourage broader utilization of testing methods, and a greater chance of early intervention where possible.

Again I'd like to thank our witnesses for their participation in this morning's hearing. To my knowledge, a Congressional hearing has never cured a disease. But surely with such a distinguished panel of witnesses, we can garner valuable ideas to raise awareness, anticipate challenges, encourage research, and support Alzheimer's patients and their families in the best way we can.

I now turn to Ranking Member Gordon Smith for his opening statement.