

STATEMENT OF SENATOR SUSAN M. COLLINS  
HEARING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON RETIREMENT AND AGING  
"THE STATE OF ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH: 100 YEARS LATER"  
MARCH 20, 2007

MADAME CHAIRMAN, as the Senate co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease, I appreciate your invitation to participate in this morning's hearing.

Alzheimer's is a devastating disease that takes a tremendous personal and economic toll on both the individual and the family. As someone whose family has experienced the pain of Alzheimer's, I know that there is no more helpless feeling than to watch the progression of this dreadful disease. It is an agonizing experience to look into the eyes of a loved one only to receive a confused look in return.

An estimated 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, more than double the number in 1980. Moreover, Alzheimer's costs the United States just under \$150 billion a year, primarily in nursing home and other long-term care costs. This figure will increase exponentially as the baby boom generation ages. As the baby boomers move into the years of highest risk for Alzheimer's disease, a strong and sustained research effort is our best tool to slow the progression and prevent the onset of this heart-breaking terrible disease.

Our investments in Alzheimer's research have begun to pay dividends. Effective treatments are tantalizingly within our grasp. Moreover, if scientists can find a way to delay the onset of this devastating disease for even five years, our nation will save more than \$60 billion every year in health and long-term care costs and an incalculable amount in human suffering.

If we are to keep up the momentum we have established, however, we must increase our investment in Alzheimer's disease research. Congress recently doubled over five years the funding for the National Institutes of Health. This is the largest increase in funding for biomedical disease research in history, and millions of Americans, including the families of Alzheimer's patients, are profoundly grateful. We have made tremendous progress; this is no time to take our foot off the accelerator.

We have two choices. We can sit back and continue to pay the bills and endure the suffering, or we can aggressively pursue a national strategy aimed at preventing, delaying and even curing this devastating and debilitating disease.

That is why I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of the Senator from

Maryland's "Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2007" to double the authorization levels for Alzheimer's research at the NIH to \$1.3 billion.

In addition to increasing funding for research, we must also do more to support Alzheimer's patients and their families. I am therefore also pleased to be an original cosponsor of the "Alzheimer's Family Assistance Act of 2007" which will provide a tax credit of up to \$3,000 to help families meet the costs of caring for a loved one with a long-term, chronic disease like Alzheimer's. The legislation will also encourage more Americans to plan for their future long-term care needs by providing a tax deduction to help them purchase long-term care insurance.

Again, Madame Chairman, thank you for inviting me to participate in this morning's hearing, which I hope will generate increased support for the research that is necessary to find better treatments and ultimately a cure for this terrible disease.