David Hyde Pierce Shares Personal Experience with Alzheimer’s, Urges Congress to Increase Support for Caregivers

Caregivers and Expert Witnesses Make the Case for Funding Increases Before Senate Aging Committee during Alzheimer’s Association Advocacy Forum

Washington, D.C. – Emmy Award-winning actor David Hyde Pierce today praised Congress for its continued commitment to increasing research funding for Alzheimer’s and called for additional funding for research and similar progress supporting people with Alzheimer’s disease and their families.

Pierce’s remarks came in testimony before the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging at a hearing entitled “Finding a Cure: Assessing Progress Toward the Goal of Ending Alzheimer’s by 2025.” During the hearing, which occurred during the 28th Annual Alzheimer’s Association Advocacy Forum, he noted that Congress passed an historic $350 million increase in Alzheimer’s research funding in 2015. “While this is progress, more is needed and for advancements that have eluded us in the goals to enhance care quality and efficiency and expanding supports for people with Alzheimer’s disease and their families,” he said.

Pierce, who lost his grandfather to Alzheimer’s and his father to dementia, shared with the committee his personal experience and the emotional and financial toll dementia has on families and friends caring for those with Alzheimer’s or other dementias. “I witnessed my grandfather’s decline, and saw how the strain of caregiving drastically affected my grandmother’s health,” Pierce said. “Along with my brother and sisters, I was a part-time caregiver for my father after our mom passed away, her own health no doubt compromised by the burden of coping with dad’s dementia. These experiences are all too familiar for many of us in this room and across the country.”

The Alzheimer’s Association 2016 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures report, released March 30, revealed the extent that the 15 million Americans who care for a family member or friend with Alzheimer’s or other dementias make sacrifices, many of whom reported jeopardizing their own financial stability and forfeiting basic needs such as food, transportation, shelter and medical care to provide for their loved one.

“Given the dramatic human and financial costs of Alzheimer’s disease, Congressional support to increase caregiver support and federal Alzheimer’s research funding is imperative if we are to
achieve the goals laid out in the *National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease,*” said Harry Johns, Alzheimer’s Association President and CEO. “David Hyde Pierce is an amazing voice of the cause, and he is not alone. He was joined today by nearly 1,200 Alzheimer’s Association advocates, caregivers and persons living with the disease who are here in Washington for the Alzheimer’s Association Advocacy Forum to share their own stories with their members of Congress and change the course of Alzheimer’s disease for millions.”

“Alzheimer’s is a devastating disease that exacts a tremendous personal and economic toll on individuals, families, and our health care system,” said Senator Collins. “While we have made significant progress in increasing funding for Alzheimer’s research, we must continue to support the research community, which is making important strides through clinical trials with new therapeutic targets. Moreover, we must support the family caregivers, who make many personal and financial sacrifices to ensure that their loved ones have the care they need. I am pleased to join with the Alzheimer’s Association and the many advocates who work tirelessly to combat this disease. Together, we can achieve a world where Alzheimer’s can be treated, cured, or prevented.”

Pierce, who has served on the Advisory Council on Alzheimer’s Research, Care and Services, which was formed through the *National Alzheimer’s Project Act,* as a caregiver representative, requested the committee continue on the path laid out by the National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease. “The investment in research is vital to ultimately achieving an effective treatment for Alzheimer’s, but the reality is that we need an equally strong investment in caring for those living with the disease today. We need to prioritize actions within the National Plan that will have the greatest impact on improving the lives of those living with Alzheimer’s and their families,” Pierce said.

Today, more than five million people are living with Alzheimer’s, the most expensive disease in the nation and the only leading cause of death in the U.S. without a way to prevent, cure or even slow its progression. Total national cost of caring for those with Alzheimer’s and other dementias is estimated at $236 billion (excluding unpaid caregiving), of which $160 billion is the cost to Medicare and Medicaid.

To learn more about the Advocacy Forum please visit [alz.org/forum](http://alz.org/forum). To learn more about the Alzheimer’s Association *Facts and Figures* report please visit [alz.org/facts](http://alz.org/facts).

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