



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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ENDING 2-YEAR WAITING PERIOD FOR MEDICARE
- Alzheimer's Association Statement -

Washington, DC (September 27, 2007) – Ending the Medicare Disability Waiting Period Act of 2007 (S 2102), offered by Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), would provide much needed assistance to those under age 65 diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's who lose their jobs and their employer based health insurance. There are as many as 500,000 individuals under age 65 with early onset Alzheimer's or a related dementia who may qualify for Medicare benefits under Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), but must suffer through the 24 months after the date their SSDI begins for Medicare benefits to start. Over a 10 year period, this legislation would phase out the waiting period and would also, in the interim, create a process by which those with life-threatening diseases, like Alzheimer's, could get an exception to the waiting period.

Providing immediate access to Medicare benefits for people disabled by Alzheimer's disease would reduce the problem of lack of health insurance and high out-of-pocket expenditures for this vulnerable population. It ensures access to critical health care services, including prescription drugs that can help manage the disease. According to national data from the Health and Retirement Survey (HRS), prescription drugs can cost people with Alzheimer's as much as four times that for people with normal cognitive status. Additionally HRS data suggests almost one-third (29 percent) of people age 55-64 with disabling cognitive impairments have no health insurance and this landmark legislation could help remedy this troublesome problem.

Alzheimer's disease poses tremendous burdens on individuals and families, burdens which are made worse by lack of health care coverage. As the leading organization representing people with Alzheimer's disease, the Alzheimer's Association applauds Senator Bingaman for his leadership and urges swift enactment on this important legislation to provide invaluable health coverage and peace of mind for those with Alzheimer's and other disabling, fatal diseases.