NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR CAREGIVING

Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention (ASAP) Act

What It Means for America's Family Caregivers

September 2026

According to the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP's **Caregiving in the US 2025** report, more than 59 million Americans care for an adult with a serious illness or disability, often shouldering demanding, around-the-clock responsibilities. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias such as frontotemporal dementia are among the most common conditions that pull families into this role, and earlier detection could ease the path ahead. The bipartisan Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention (ASAP) Act (S. 3267 / H.R. 6130) would give the Secretary of Health and Human Services authority to approve Medicare coverage of blood test screenings for dementia - once authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) - a step that could reshape the caregiving journey for millions of families.

The Scale of Dementia Caregiving in America

More than one in four (27 percent) family caregivers report that the person they are caring for has Alzheimer's, dementia, or another memory-related impairment. Alzheimer's and other dementias rank as the second most common primary condition requiring care.

Dementia caregiving is among the most intensive and long-lasting forms of family caregiving. Nationally, 30 percent of all caregivers have been providing care for five or more years, and caregivers spend an average of 27 hours per week on care tasks. [1] Two-thirds help with at least one activity of daily living such as bathing, dressing, or feeding. [1] These tasks become increasingly demanding as dementia progresses.

Key Data Point

17%

of family caregivers say they are "not sure" whether their care recipient has a memory issue - pointing to a significant gap in clinical detection and diagnosis that the ASAP Act could help close. [1]

1 AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving. Caregiving in the US 2025. Washington, DC: AARP. July 2025. https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00373.001

Closing the Diagnosis Gap

How the ASAP Act Could Help Family Caregivers

Today, too many families face a long, difficult path to answers. Confirming Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can require specialists, advanced imaging like PET scans, or invasive procedures like lumbar punctures – often meaning travel, delays, costs, and added stress for patients and caregivers alike. Blood-based screening tests could simplify the start of that journey, helping families and clinicians learn sooner whether further evaluation is needed.

Brain changes due to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias may begin as many as 20 years before symptoms appear. Research presented at the 2026 Alzheimer's Association International Conference found that high levels of the blood biomarker p-tau217 may help predict future cognitive decline, which can give doctors an early-warning tool like a cholesterol test. Symptom-free older adults with very high levels of the biomarker had a 78% chance of developing cognitive impairment within 10 years.

For caregivers, this matters enormously. Research finds that diagnosed dementia produces better outcomes for family caregiving experiences than undiagnosed dementia. [2] When families know what they're dealing with, they can plan, seek training, pursue lifestyle interventions, and access services earlier rather than struggling without answers. Early detection is also essential because FDA-approved disease-modifying therapies are intended for people in the earliest stages of disease, when treatment conversations and timely referral may matter most.

More Time to Plan as a Family

Earlier detection could give families a critical window to make legal, financial, and care plans while the person living with Alzheimer's and related diseases can still participate in decisions. Currently, only 43 percent of care recipients have future care plans in place, and 38 percent of caregivers report that no comprehensive plans exist for managing their care recipients' affairs. An earlier diagnosis creates the opportunity for families to establish powers of attorney, discuss care preferences, and arrange financial affairs before the disease progresses.

2 Burgdorf JG, Amjad H. Impact of diagnosed (vs undiagnosed) dementia on family caregiving experiences. J Am Geriatr Soc. 2023; 71(4): 1236-1242. doi:**10.1111/jgs.18155**

Reducing the Emotional and Physical Toll

Caregiving takes a measurable toll on family members. Among all caregivers nationally:

38% report high emotional stress.[1]

45% experience moderate or high physical strain.[1]

23% say they have difficulty caring for their own health because of caregiving.[1]

24% report feeling alone.[1]

Dementia caregiving intensifies these challenges. When families do not have a clear diagnosis, caregivers report even greater uncertainty, stress, and difficulty accessing appropriate services. By making blood test screening available through Medicare, the ASAP Act could help families get answers sooner and connect to support systems earlier in the disease trajectory.

Why Legislation Is Needed: The Medicare Coverage Gap

Medicare already covers routine blood test screening for diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. However, under current law, Medicare can only cover new screening and preventive services if explicitly authorized by Congress or recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Without the ASAP Act, there could be significant delays between FDA clearance of an Alzheimer's blood screening test and the point at which Medicare beneficiaries have access to it.

For the nearly half of care recipients who are age 75 or older, and therefore overwhelmingly Medicare beneficiaries, a delay could cost families years of opportunity for earlier intervention. Without the benefit of early detection, family caregivers will continue to navigate a progressive disease with fewer opportunities to plan, intervene, and access care.

1 AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving. Caregiving in the US 2025. Washington, DC: AARP. July 2025. https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00373.001

Americans Want Early Detection

Public opinion strongly favors the kind of screening the ASAP Act would make possible:

Fewer than 1 in 10 people with Alzheimer's are diagnosed during mild cognitive impairment, the earliest stage when treatment is possible. [3]

Nearly 80% of Americans would want to know their diagnosis while symptoms are still mild or before they appear. [3]

Over 90% would want a simple test that allows for early treatment. [3]

In a Caregiver's Words

"Caring for your aging parents is not something easily prepared for, but it is a relief to know that there are ways doctors can be of more help. The patients must come first, and by educating caregivers by giving us more information on how to continue putting them first, we can work together both meaningfully and more successfully."

– Rachel, New York | Caregiver to her mother who has dementia

The Bottom Line for Families

The ASAP Act is a straightforward policy with potentially far-reaching consequences for America's 59 million family caregivers of adults. By authorizing the HHS Secretary to approve Medicare coverage of dementia blood test screenings when warranted, the legislation could give families something they desperately need: time. Time to plan, time to access services, time to pursue treatments, and time to prepare – emotionally and financially – for the road ahead.

For the millions of family caregivers who report feeling alone, financially strained, and emotionally overwhelmed, earlier detection is not just a medical advancement; it is a lifeline. Congress should pass the ASAP Act to ensure Medicare beneficiaries can access FDA-authorized blood-based screening tests for Alzheimer's disease without unnecessary delay.

3 American Perspectives on Early Detection of Alzheimer's Disease in the Era of Treatment. (n.d.). Retrieved August 14, 2026, from **https://www.alz.org/getmedia/a6b0adee-d708-43a0-b78d-44bdd9234b60/alzheimers-facts-and-figures-special-report-2025.pdf**

About the National Alliance for Caregiving

The **National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC)** is a catalyst for change, transforming how the United States recognizes, supports, and values our 63+ million family caregivers providing complex care. Through our nationally recognized research and advocacy for the first-ever National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers, we drive the policy, system, and culture change needed to make family caregivers a national priority. To learn more, visit **caregiving.org.**

About the Alzheimer's Association

The **Alzheimer's Association** is a worldwide voluntary health organization dedicated to Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia – by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia®. Visit **alz.org** or call 800.272.3900.

About the Alzheimer's Impact Movement

The **Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM)** is a separately incorporated advocacy affiliate of the Alzheimer's Association. AIM works to develop and advance policies to overcome Alzheimer's disease through increased investment in research, enhanced care and improved support. For more information, visit **alzimpact.org**.

About the Policy Explainer Series

The Policy Explainer Series, a cornerstone of the National Alliance for Caregiving's Healthcare Access, Affordability & Innovation Project, translates complex healthcare legislation and policy into plain terms - spelling out what it means for family caregivers. Designed for caregivers, patient advocates, and policymakers alike, each explainer pairs plain-language summaries with caregiver-focused analysis, data from Caregiving in the US 2025, and real caregiver stories - connecting policy to the realities of caregiving. To learn more go to **caregiving.org**.

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