



GOP Budget Threatens Americans with Alzheimer's

This week, the Republicans have put forth a budget resolution that attacks the health care and financial security of 5.5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's. The budget cuts a trillion dollars from Medicaid and more than \$470 billion from Medicare, undermining the critical programs that Americans with Alzheimer's and their families depend on. These draconian cuts would pull the rug out from millions of Americans and force them to scramble to pay for the treatment they need.

Alzheimer's disease is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, ranking [fifth](#) among those ages 65 or older. [One in three seniors](#) dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia. The disease, along with other dementias, is also one of the costliest to older Americans and their families. In 2017 alone, it is projected to cost [\\$259 billion](#), and promises to only keep climbing. Providing relief from these costs to both families and our health care system requires us to maintain and increase meaningful investment, not cut it. We must help families identify and treat Alzheimer's and fund the National Institutes of Health to research better treatment.

With no cure and only limited treatments available, Medicare and Medicaid provide families with critical financial lifelines. For example, Medicaid helps pay for nursing homes and other long-term care services for people with Alzheimer's. On average, Medicare pays for [\\$23,497](#) in health care costs for beneficiaries with Alzheimer's, while Medicaid pays for \$8,182. In total, Medicare and Medicaid pay for nearly 70 percent of care for seniors with Alzheimer's or other dementias.

The draconian cuts to Medicare and Medicaid will force families to decide between working and caring for family members. Family caregivers often have to quit their jobs or work long hours to take care of their loved ones with Alzheimer's. In the past year, even before these cuts were on the table, 15 percent of caregivers to someone with Alzheimer's left their jobs or retired early due to their care-giving responsibilities. Cutting Medicaid funding for nursing homes and other paid caregivers will only increase the burden on family caregivers. In New Mexico alone, 106,000 caregivers, often daughters or other family members, provide 121 million hours of unpaid care.

Congressional Republicans' budget is their latest attempt to undermine funding to necessary programs that support those most vulnerable. By taking a hacksaw to Medicare and Medicaid, Republicans are leaving millions of Americans living with Alzheimer's, and their families, without medical services and the long-term care that so many desperately need.