



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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File #: 24-3684, Version: 1

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### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

#### REQUESTING THAT MEDICARE FULLY FUND ALZHEIMER DISEASE TREATMENT AND EARLY DETECTION DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES

**WHEREAS**, Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, and among the top 10 causes of death in the U.S. More people die of Alzheimer's than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined. With Alzheimer's, the brain shrinks, brain cells die, and peoples' memory and language centers fail and as the disease advances, the loss of brain function leads to dehydration, malnutrition, infection, and ultimately death; and

**WHEREAS**, Alzheimer's affects people 65 years of age and older. More than 6 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's and by 2050, this number is projected to rise to nearly 13 million; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. is experiencing a shortage of specialists in elder and memory-related medicine and nurses providing care at nursing homes and assisted-living facilities. In regions with high rates of Alzheimer's, these shortages are particularly catastrophic within the current models of care; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health, in 2020, there were 230,000 people over 65 years of age living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia in Illinois. This figure is projected to reach 260,000 in 2025, a 13% increase. In 2021, approximately 383,000 Illinois caregivers provided more than 486 billion hours of care to someone living with a form of dementia; and

**WHEREAS**, according to new estimates released in 2023 by the Alzheimer's Association, an estimated 13.6% of Cook County's 65+ population has Alzheimer's disease. That compares to 12.0% statewide and ranks number 1 of 102 counties in Illinois included in the data. About 107,600 people have Alzheimer's in Cook County; and

**WHEREAS**, on July 6, 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted full approval for a treatment for Alzheimer's in people in the early, mild stages of the neurodegenerative condition, which works to treat the early stages of the disease itself and slows its progression; and

**WHEREAS**, the high cost of the drug will be only partially covered by Medicare if a patient's medical team participates in a registry to track the drug's outcomes. Those high costs could keep the treatment out of reach for low-income Americans, who already have higher odds of developing Alzheimer's, studies have shown; and

**WHEREAS**, nearly all Alzheimer's patients are on government insurance, and estimates show that Medicare could invest \$2 billion to \$5 billion annually on the new drug and related care instead of the \$345 billion that Alzheimer's and other dementias cost in 2023, including nursing home stays, symptom management medications, and other care for those with the disease; costs that are estimated to rise to nearly \$1 trillion by 2050; and

**WHEREAS**, one study from the University of Chicago estimates Americans would save from \$212 billion to over \$1 trillion in care-related costs over the next decade, if similar drugs that treat the disease can slow progression in even half of mild Alzheimer's patients; and

**WHEREAS**, with treatment to slow the progression of Alzheimer's now available, diagnosing the disease sooner to retain more brain function is of the utmost importance. Warning signs for the disease include disruptive memory loss, difficulty

with familiar tasks, worsening judgment, and changes in mood and personality; and

**WHEREAS**, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is the federal agency that provides health coverage to more than 160 million through Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Health Insurance Marketplace.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby request that the Centers for Medicare and Medical Services (CMS) fully fund treatment of Alzheimer's disease and updated early detection and diagnosing policies and procedures to slow the progression of Alzheimer's in patients; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners also requests that the Cook County Health and Hospitals System evaluate and update policies and procedures for early detection and diagnosing of patients evaluated to slow down the progression of Alzheimer's disease; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be tendered to the Illinois' Congressional delegation, the House Speaker and Minority Leader, the Senate Majority Leader and Minority Leader, and the White House.