

Chair Billinger and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on a critical issue affecting healthcare providers and patients alike: Medicaid reimbursement for cognitive assessment and care planning. As a practicing family physician with nearly 20 years of experience, and having witnessed firsthand the impact of early-onset Alzheimer's on my mother-in-law, I am deeply invested in this issue.

Despite advancements in healthcare, significant barriers persist in diagnosing and treating Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases in a timely manner. To address this, Medicare began reimbursing providers for cognitive assessments for dementia in 2017, a crucial step in improving access to proper diagnosis. However, many individuals, like my mother-in-law, develop dementia before becoming eligible for Medicare, highlighting the need for expanded reimbursement.

Early detection and diagnosis are vital in slowing disease progression and preventing costly complications. Nevertheless, cognitive assessments require substantial time commitments, often exceeding 30–60 minutes, which can be challenging for providers with limited appointment slots.

To bridge this gap, I urge you to approve Medicaid funding for providers conducting these assessments. This critical reimbursement would expand access to early treatment, increase provider awareness, and ultimately benefit the growing population affected by Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases. By taking this step, we can ensure that more individuals receive timely diagnoses and appropriate care, slowing disease progression and improving health outcomes.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Teran Naccarato