



February 25, 2009

The Honorable Blanche L. Lincoln
355 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Lincoln:

The Alzheimer's Association would like to thank you for co-sponsoring the bill, *Retooling the Health Care Workforce for an Aging America Act of 2009 (S. 245)*. As the leading research and advocacy organization for Alzheimer's disease in the United States, the Alzheimer's Association appreciates your dedication to improving the quality of care for individuals residing in long-term care facilities.

The Alzheimer's Association believes that it is imperative that licensed health professionals, direct care workers, and family caregivers receive better education and training to assist the growing aging population, especially for people with cognitive impairments. Approximately 70 percent of nursing home residents have some degree of cognitive impairment and 27 percent of older adults living in the community with severe disabilities (those unable to perform three or more daily activities) are cognitively impaired.

In addition, your appeal for new and expanded educational centers and training programs that focus on geriatric and long-term care will greatly enhance the expertise of future health care professionals in areas such as medical, psychology, nursing, social work, as well as other disciplines. Because this training is linked to occupations that are in demand, the severe shortage in health care personnel trained to care for older adults will be lessened.

We truly appreciate your acknowledgement of this issue, which is so important for people with cognitive impairments and their caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association looks forward to working with you on this legislation. If you have any questions, please contact me at Brenda.Sulick@alz.org or 202-638-8672.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to assisting the needs of older adults in this country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda Sulick".

Brenda Sulick, Ph.D.
Director, Federal Health Policy