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LANDMARK REPORT URGES IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PREPARE MINNESOTA FOR ALZHEIMER'S CRISIS

Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota Launches Statewide Initiative to "Prepare Minnesota for Alzheimer's 2020" at Capitol Rally

St. Paul, Minn., January 13, 2011 – In the next 15 years, the number of Minnesotans with Alzheimer's disease will soar to more than 135,000, and by then, the total cost of care for these individuals could reach an estimated $10 billion. According to a new report, "Preparing Minnesota for Alzheimer's: Budgetary, Social and Personal Impacts," Minnesotans must take action now to see significant cost savings and improved care and support for people with Alzheimer's and their caregivers.

Unveiled today at the Capitol, the report represents the efforts of the Alzheimer's Disease Working Group. In 2009, the Minnesota Legislature mandated the creation of the Alzheimer's Disease Working Group, comprised of Alzheimer's experts and community leaders, to develop recommendations on policy and program changes that would prepare the state for the impending Alzheimer's crisis.

Minnesota is experiencing a historic increase in its older population, and right now, the first wave of baby boomers is reaching 65, the age of greater risk for developing Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's is not normal aging; it is a progressive, fatal, no-fault brain disease. Beyond the stigma and disability for the affected person, perhaps more than any other disease, the human toll of Alzheimer's extends to families. In 2010, 200,000 Minnesotans caring for family members provided an estimated 223 million hours of unpaid care, which represents a value of $2.6 billion. The financial burden of Alzheimer's is borne by all as average hospital care costs for Medicare recipients are three times greater for those with Alzheimer's than those without dementia.

The Alzheimer's Disease Working Group recommends actions in this report to transform the state's medical and long-term care systems and communities in ways that would reduce suffering and provide near-term cost savings, namely:

- Identify Alzheimer's early
- Use a Health Care Home model for Alzheimer's care
- Achieve quality and competence in dementia care
- Prepare communities and the public
- Train medical providers in dementia care
- Pursue cost-saving policies; and
- Intensify research and surveillance

"Minnesota can be a pioneer in the charge to make Alzheimer's a priority and demand a better future for those living with the disease," said Kathleen Harrington, Chair of the Minnesota Board on Aging and member of the Alzheimer's Disease Working Group. "We've come together today – caregivers, people with early stage Alzheimer's, researchers, healthcare providers, faith communities, legislators and all citizens – in the fight to take action on this disease."

The Alzheimer's Association supports the recommendations of the Alzheimer's Disease Working Group. At the first-ever Alzheimer's rally at the Capitol today, the Alzheimer's Association called upon Minnesotans to join a new statewide initiative, "Prepare Minnesota for Alzheimer's 2020," to raise awareness, reduce the stigma associated with the disease and provide support to families impacted in Minnesota.

"As this report shows, Minnesota cannot afford to sit on the sidelines," said Mary Birchard, Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota. "Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's, but until that day we need to take action to prepare. To do nothing will have devastating results on individuals, families, communities and health systems that stand in the path of Alzheimer's disease. We call on legislators and individuals to step up to help Minnesota be the first state fully prepared for Alzheimer's."

The Alzheimer's Association encourages Minnesotans to learn more about Alzheimer's disease, to urge elected leaders to support legislation that works for all families and individuals impacted by the disease, and to help communities become prepared for Alzheimer's by 2020.

To read the full report or to pledge to take action to Prepare Minnesota for Alzheimer's 2020, please visit the Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota chapter website, www.alz.org/mnnd.

About the Alzheimer's Association
The Alzheimer's Association is the leading U.S. voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Its mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research, to provide and enhance care and support for all affected, and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. The Association's vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease. For more information, visit the Alzheimer's Association website, www.alz.org/mnnd.

About the Alzheimer's Disease Working Group
The Alzheimer's Disease Working Group is an initiative established by the 2009 Minnesota Legislature and appointed and convened by the Minnesota Board on Aging. The group is comprised of highly respected experts in the fields of healthcare, Alzheimer's research, home- and community-based services, and long-term care, as well as representatives of state departments of health and human services. Two individuals with Alzheimer's and a number of family caregivers provide their insights. The group is mandated to study the status of Alzheimer's disease in Minnesota and make recommendations to the Legislature for needed policy and program changes that will prepare the state for the future. For the past 18 months, over ninety individuals spent time developing a report detailing a set of priority recommendations. The recommendations are framed by the overarching vision that Minnesota must be prepared for the budgetary, social and personal impacts of Alzheimer's disease through a comprehensive, person-centered approach to the disease that is reinforced through system transformation at all levels.

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