



# NATIONAL GRANGE

*Elevating rural interests since 1867*

1616 H St. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006

## **National Grange Supports New Report on Alzheimer's Crisis in Rural America, Calls on Congress and Federal Policymakers to Act**

*Study finds rural communities face disproportionate barriers to diagnosis – and that proven, affordable solutions exist but lack federal support*

**Washington, D.C. (March 16, 2026)** — Today the National Grange supported the release of a new report by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) examining how rural Americans face a disproportionate and growing burden from Alzheimer's disease – driven by structural barriers that delay diagnosis, limit access to emerging therapies, and impose staggering costs on patients, caregivers, and rural health systems.

The report, *Leveraging Innovation to Improve Alzheimer's Diagnosis and Care in Rural America*, highlights how rural populations – who are on average older, more medically vulnerable, and underserved by specialists and diagnostic infrastructure – are being left behind as Alzheimer's care rapidly advances. It also points to actions Congress and Federal policymakers can take to expand Medicare coverage for emerging diagnostic and screening tools, strengthen the rural health workforce, invest in broadband and hospital infrastructure, and increase support for family caregivers.

"Alzheimer's has touched families in every corner of rural America, and for too long those families have been left to face it with fewer resources, fewer specialists, and fewer options," said Christine Hamp, President of the National Grange. "This report lays out both the scale of the problem and the path forward. Geography should never determine whether someone receives a diagnosis in time to benefit from treatment — and right now, for too many rural Americans, it does."

The good news is that scalable, affordable diagnostic solutions already exist — they simply lack the federal policy framework to reach the communities that need them most.

The FDA cleared two blood-based biomarker tests for Alzheimer's diagnosis in 2025. These tests are less invasive, less costly and less complicated to administer than other Alzheimer's diagnostic tools. Research is ongoing to evaluate whether blood tests can be used to detect Alzheimer's in people before they show symptoms – which could empower individuals to take steps to reduce their risk and better understand their options for

treatment. Digital cognitive screening tools can be administered by non-specialists through telehealth, expanding early detection even where clinical staff are limited.

More than 7 million Americans currently live with Alzheimer's disease, a number projected to nearly double to by 2060. According to the report, 71 percent of rural physicians report that there are insufficient dementia specialists to meet demand in their communities, compared with 44 percent of physicians in urban areas – and many traditional diagnostic tools such as PET imaging and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) testing are largely inaccessible in rural settings.

The economic consequences of Alzheimer's disease are severe: Nearly one in five Medicare dollars is currently spent on Alzheimer's and related dementias — a share projected to rise to one in three by 2050. Rural caregivers, who are more likely to be unpaid family members, absorb a disproportionate share of these costs, with nearly 23 percent more likely to experience significant financial strain than their urban counterparts.

The report identifies a clear path forward to expand access and narrow rural health disparities. The National Grange is calling on Congress and Federal policymakers to implement the following recommendations outlined in the report:

- Pass the **Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention (ASAP) Act** (H.R. 6130/S.3267) which would create a pathway for Medicare coverage of FDA-cleared blood tests for Alzheimer's screening.
- Pass the **Accelerating Access to Dementia & Alzheimer's Provider Training (AADAPT) Act** (H.R. 3747) to fund virtual continuing education programs for rural primary care providers on dementia diagnosis and long-term management.
- Establish a **dedicated CPT code for digital cognitive assessments** to create a clear, consistent reimbursement pathway for these tools – removing the uncertainty that currently discourages rural providers from adopting them.
- Pass the **Convenient Care for Caregivers Act (S. 3234)** to create a pilot program providing rural caregivers with access to counseling, peer support, and health services at the same time and location as the patients they assist.
- Pass the **Fair Funding for Rural Hospitals Act (S. 474)** and the **Rural Hospital Support Act (S. 335)** to strengthen Medicaid funding for rural hospitals and support the infrastructure needed to integrate new diagnostic technologies.

"The tools to change outcomes for rural Alzheimer's patients are within reach — but only if Congress acts to make sure rural patients and providers can actually access and afford them," Hamp concluded.

The full report is available at <https://www.nationalgrange.org/alzheimers-crisis>

## **About the National Grange**

Founded in 1867, the Grange is a fraternal, nonpartisan organization with roughly 1,400 local chapters across the country. Grange members provide millions of hours of service and donations totaling millions of dollars annually, based on the needs identified in their local communities. From providing dictionaries to third-grade students often unserved or underserved by broadband internet, to hosting candidate forums, to providing handmade caps for newborns, Grange members find ways to improve the lives of their neighbors both in service and through advocacy efforts.

Learn more about the Grange and our grassroots policy and priority issues, the service of our members across the nation to improve the quality of life in their communities, and where you can find a Grange local to you by visiting [www.nationalgrange.org](http://www.nationalgrange.org).

Press Contact: Phil Vonada, [pvonada@nationalgrange.org](mailto:pvonada@nationalgrange.org)