April 5th, 2023

The Honorable Susan Eggman
Chair, Senate Health Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3310
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 639 (Limon) – Support

Dear Chair Eggman,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), one of the state’s foremost grassroots senior and disability advocacy organizations, representing over 1 million Californians, is proud to support SB 639 (Limon), which would improve the ability of Californians to receive a timely and accurate diagnosis as well as quality care by reorienting our world class California Alzheimer’s Disease Centers (CADC) to become diagnostic hubs that serve all members of their communities by providing diagnostic services, as well as training to physicians through the first of its kind program, Dementia Care Aware.

Alzheimer’s disease is an irreversible, progressive, and terminal brain disorder that impacts millions of Californians. Currently, 690,000 Californians have the disease, and over 1.3 million Californians are caring for someone with the disease. One of the largest issues facing those impacted by Alzheimer’s is receiving a timely diagnosis. Additionally, fewer than half of Medicare beneficiaries who have a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s or another dementia in their Medicare billing records (or their caregiver, if the beneficiary’s cognitive impairment prevented him or her from responding) report being given of the diagnosis (Facts and Figures, 2015).

The practical and emotional impacts of not having a diagnosis are vast and deep. Without a diagnosis, individuals cannot access clinical trials that are crucial for discovering treatments or a cure to the disease. Without a diagnosis, individuals cannot access care planning resources that can help in accessing the limited care resources available. Without a diagnosis, individuals and their families are left without crucial information that can help them life plan with dignity and love. These are just some of the impacts of not having a timely and accurate diagnosis.

These impacts can be mitigated through the work of our CADCs and of Dementia Care Aware. By ensuring that these hubs have the support and resources needed to successfully engage their regions, everyone can have access to the world class services and expertise these centers contain. Lastly, our state’s Master Plan for Aging new 2023-2024 initiatives uplift the importance of this work, and specifically the Dementia Care Aware program in Goal 2 “Health Reimagined” initiative 45. That is why CARA supports SB 639. We look forward to
your support of this important bill, and to continue to work with you on any policy designed to support those with Alzheimer’s.

We respectfully urge your AYE vote on SB 639.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly
Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)

Keith Umemoto
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)