



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro Secures First-Ever Investment in Neurodegenerative Disease Research in 2025–26 Budget

The first-ever investment will advance scientific discovery while addressing the growing impact of neurodegenerative disease on older Pennsylvanians.

Administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the funding will be distributed through competitive grants to qualifying institutions conducting research on neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson's disease, and related disorders.

Age is the primary risk factor for many of these conditions, and Pennsylvania is home to 3.4 million older adults — the fifth-largest older adult population in the nation.



Pittsburgh, PA — Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** highlighted a **\$5 million** investment in first-ever, dedicated funding for neurodegenerative disease research, secured in the [2025–26 budget](#) signed into law by the Governor. The investment marks a major step forward for older adults, caregivers, and families across the Commonwealth.

The Governor was joined by **Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen**, as well as researchers and community and elected leaders at the **University of Pittsburgh** to highlight the new funding and ceremonially sign [Senate Bill 160](#), the General Appropriations Act.

“Pennsylvania is home to some of the most innovative researchers and medical institutions in the world,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “By making this first-ever investment in neurodegenerative disease research, we’re accelerating the search for cures, supporting families and caregivers, and building on our work to ensure older Pennsylvanians can age with dignity, independence, and hope.”

The funding, [administered by DOH](#), will be distributed through competitive grants to qualifying institutions conducting research on neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer’s disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson’s disease, and related disorders. Applications for the grant program are expected to open in early 2026. With world-class research institutions across the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania is uniquely positioned to translate scientific discovery into earlier detection, better treatments, and ultimately cures.

“This investment continues to build on the Shapiro Administration’s work to better understand neurodegenerative diseases and to support Pennsylvania researchers who are working tirelessly to find cures for diseases like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and ALS,” said **Secretary Dr. Bogen**. “Far too many Pennsylvanians — including myself — know how devastating these diagnoses can be for families and caregivers. We are grateful for the leadership of Representative Kyle Mullins in championing this legislation and to Governor Shapiro for ensuring it was included in the final 2025–26 budget.”

The [2025–26 budget](#) investment builds on last year’s creation of the Commonwealth’s first-ever [Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders \(ADRD\) Office](#) within the **Pennsylvania Department of Aging**, a landmark step to coordinate services, advance planning, and strengthen support for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. Reflecting the Governor’s commitment to older adults and Pennsylvanians with disabilities, the budget includes a **\$21 million investment** to increase wages, provide paid time off, and expand access to affordable insurance for approximately 8,500 direct care workers serving seniors and adults with physical disabilities in the participant-directed model. The budget also strengthens community-based care by providing a **\$10 million increase** for Pennsylvania’s 52 Area Agencies on Aging to deliver essential services such as meals, social activities, and transportation.

“As Pennsylvania’s aging population continues to increase, the number of Pennsylvanians affected by Alzheimer’s and dementia-related disorders is growing too. The Department of Aging is proud to help, support and advocate for those individuals

and families impacted. This crucial investment in neurodegenerative disease research will assist in finding solutions to end ADRD while elevating our Commonwealth to become a leader in this important work,” said **Secretary of Aging Jason Kaulich**. “We are grateful for Governor Shapiro and the General Assembly for investing in this research to help improve the lives of Pennsylvanians living with ADRD, their families and loved ones, and their caregivers.”

Addressing a Growing Challenge as Adults Grow Older

The **University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine** is a top-tier research institution recognized nationally for medical research excellence. Pitt is home to the Pittsburgh Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases (PIND), which brings together multidisciplinary teams to study Parkinson’s disease, ALS, Huntington’s disease, stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, and other disorders affecting brain health.

“The University of Pittsburgh is proud to lead the life sciences century at the intersection of health, AI, and tech,” said **University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Joan Gabel**. “And we sincerely appreciate Governor Shapiro’s continued leadership, as well as the General Assembly, for ensuring the Commonwealth remains at the forefront of innovative and life-changing research and breakthroughs in these areas, including in the fight against neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s, ALS, and Parkinson’s.”

“I’m grateful and excited for all the ways this significant investment will not only help advance neurodegenerative science but also patient-centered research for the hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians who suffer from some form of neurodegenerative disease,” said **Dr. Anantha Shekhar, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and John and Gertrude Petersen Dean of the School of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh**. “Through supporting statewide collaborative efforts between Pennsylvania’s top research institutions in the field, the funds will intentionally expand regional access for patients to transformative studies.”

As part of the visit, Governor Shapiro toured the laboratory of Dr. Chris Donnelly, Assistant Professor of Neurobiology, whose research focuses on the molecular pathogenesis of neurodegeneration and aging — advancing understanding of how these diseases begin and progress at the cellular level. The legislation establishing this funding was led by **Representative Kyle Mullins**, who consulted with Dr. Chris Donnelly while developing the proposal and partnered with **Representative Bryan Cutler** to lead a bipartisan effort to secure it as part of the [2025–26 budget](#). For both representatives, this is a deeply personal victory: each lost a parent to ALS, and their shared commitment helped ensure that **\$5 million** was included to fund the research.

“Thank you to Governor Shapiro, Secretary Dr. Bogen, and everyone in this Administration for their unwavering leadership and support on this issue,” said **Representative Mullins**. “Governor Shapiro was elected just 14 days after my father passed away, and less than three months later, he had me in his office to talk about the very funding we’re celebrating today. I also thank my colleagues who have

supported me through times of grief, when fighting for this cause inevitably made me remember and miss my dad more than I could explain, and those who consistently showed up with a yes vote at every step. And thank you to our world-class researchers like Dr. Donnelly, who have dedicated their lives to providing hope — hope that we will soon unlock the cruel mysteries of these diseases."

Neurodegenerative diseases affect families in every corner of the Commonwealth. According to the Pittsburgh Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases, approximately **one in four Americans** is expected to experience a neurodegenerative disease in their lifetime. In Pennsylvania alone, more than **282,000 residents are living with Alzheimer's disease**, and **over 1,000 Pennsylvanians have ALS**.

Age is the primary risk factor for many of these conditions, and Pennsylvania is home to **3.4 million older adults** — the fifth-largest older adult population in the nation. Nearly **1.5 million caregivers** across the Commonwealth provide unpaid care to loved ones, often while balancing jobs and family responsibilities. The Shapiro Administration's investments support both cutting-edge research and the real-world needs of families navigating these diseases.

Governor Shapiro's Record of Action for Older Adults and Caregivers

Governor Shapiro has advanced a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to support older Pennsylvanians, individuals living with neurodegenerative diseases, and the caregivers who support them, including:

- **Strengthened statewide leadership and coordination on Alzheimer's and dementia** by establishing the [Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders \(ADRD\) Advisory Committee](#), bringing together advocates, providers, researchers, and community partners to guide policy development, pursue federal funding, and support implementation of Pennsylvania's ADRD State Plan.
- **Invested in long-term planning and age-friendly communities** through [Aging Our Way, PA](#), the Commonwealth's 10-year strategic plan focused on improving transportation, caregiving supports, health care access, and community engagement so older adults can remain independent and connected.
- **Expanded direct support for caregivers** with the launch of the [PA CareKit](#) in May 2025, which provides training, personalized tools, and connections to respite services to help informal caregivers navigate complex caregiving responsibilities.
- **Protected access to affordable prescription medications for seniors** by signing legislation extending the cost-of-living moratorium for the PACE and PACENET programs, allowing hundreds of thousands of older Pennsylvanians to maintain vital prescription drug coverage while keeping costs predictable.

Together, these actions demonstrate the **Shapiro Administration's** [commitment](#) to investing in research, strengthening care and support systems, and helping older

Pennsylvanians age with dignity while positioning the Commonwealth as a national leader in brain health.

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