

June 8, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the undersigned national organizations representing all ages and disabilities, are writing to urge funding in the Fiscal Year 2019 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill for respite and family caregiver support that provide a safety net for family caregivers across the lifespan. We are especially aware of the fiscal constraints facing Congress and the nation, and urge you to recognize the cost-benefits of investing in these proven prevention strategies. We are very appreciative of the increase provided in FY 2018 for the **Lifespan Respite Care Program**. To continue to reach more family caregivers who receive inadequate or no support, we are requesting a modest increase to \$5 million in FY 2019. We also are very appreciative of the \$30 million restoration provided in FY 2018 for the **National Family Caregiver Support Program**. At a minimum, we request that you protect the FY 2018 increase. However, if we are to begin to address the increasing need, we need to build upon the current level with a 12 percent increase (\$21.7 m) in FY 2019.

Forty-three million family caregivers provide the vast majority of our nation's long-term services and supports, permitting individuals of all ages to remain in their communities and avoid or delay more costly nursing home or foster care placements. AARP has estimated that family caregivers provide \$470 billion in uncompensated care annually to adults, a staggering amount that is close to current federal and state spending on Medicaid health services and long-term services and supports combined (\$553 billion).

National, State and local surveys have shown respite to be among the most frequently requested services by family caregivers. Yet, 85 percent of the nation's family caregivers of adults do not receive respite. Of the nearly half of family caregivers of adults (44%) identified in the National Study of Caregiving who were providing substantial help with health care, fewer than 17% used respite. The percentage is similar for parents of children with special needs. For family caregivers caring for someone with Alzheimer's, adults with developmental disabilities, individuals with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), ALS, spinal cord or traumatic brain injury, rare diseases, and grandparents raising grandchildren, respite is especially elusive. Families caring for children, teens and adults with autism, physical disabilities or mental health conditions also can't

find or afford respite. A 2014 Rand Corporation report prepared for the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, found that limited respite services do not address the needs of military caregivers.

Respite can save dollars by helping to avoid or delay out-of-home placements or hospitalizations. In a survey of family caregivers of individuals with MS, two-thirds said that respite care would help them keep their loved ones at home. When the care recipient with MS also has cognitive impairment, the percentage of those saying respite would be helpful to avoid or delay nursing home placement jumps to 75 percent. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania studied the Medicaid records of over 28,000 children with autism ages 5 to 21. They concluded that for every \$1,000 states spent on respite services in the previous 60 days, there was an 8 percent drop in the odds of hospitalization.

Lifespan Respite systems, which maximize existing resources, require that respite become more accessible and available to all family caregivers. As importantly, Lifespan Respite systems build respite capacity and improve quality by requiring states to focus on addressing respite provider/volunteer training and recruitment, start-up of new respite services, and affordability issues for family caregivers who are not eligible for any publicly funded respite services.

We are grateful for the increase for the Lifespan Respite Program in FY 2018 to \$4.1 million. However, additional funding is needed to meet the escalating need. By investing in Lifespan Respite and other family and caregiver supports, the goal of avoiding or delaying more costly and unwanted institutional care, foster care, hospitalizations and emergency room use, can be reached. Such efforts that can help reduce Medicaid expenditures for long-term services and supports without limiting eligibility, quality, or services should be one of Congress's top priorities.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) was the first federal program to recognize the needs of the nation's family caregivers who provide the backbone of long-term services and supports. NFCSP not only funds respite, but counseling, support groups, and caregiver training for family caregivers, primarily for those who are caring for the aging and for individuals of any age with Alzheimer's or other dementias. It also provides limited supports for grandparents and older relatives to provide care for children under age 18 and to older parents and relative caregivers of adults with disabilities. However, funding for NFCSP has not kept up with the need.

We strongly urge you to fund Lifespan Respite at the modest request of \$5 million and to ensure an increase in funding for the National Family Caregiver Support Program. If you would like more information, please contact Jill Kagan at the National Respite Coalition at [jkagan@archrespite.org](mailto:jkagan@archrespite.org). Thank you for your attention to our request and for your support and recognition of the nation's family caregivers.

Sincerely,

ACCSES  
Alzheimer's Foundation of America  
American Association of Caregiving Youth  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Foundation for the Blind

American Music Therapy Association  
American Network of Community Options & Resources (ANCOR)  
American Physical Therapy Association  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)  
Autism Society  
Autism Speaks  
Brain Injury Association of America  
Caregiver Action Network  
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)  
Easterseals  
Elizabeth Dole Foundation  
Epilepsy Foundation  
Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on Caregiving  
Family Voices  
Huntington's Disease Society of America (HDSA)  
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Justice in Aging  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Lupus Foundation of America  
Lutheran Services in America  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research  
National Alliance for Caregiving  
National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Funds  
National Association for Home Care and Hospice  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)  
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)  
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities  
National Council on Aging  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Down Syndrome Society  
National Foster Parent Association  
National Military Family Association  
National MPS Society  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
National Respite Coalition  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving, GSW  
Sibling Leadership Network  
TASH  
The Arc  
United Spinal Association  
Well Spouse Association