June 28, 2018

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We, the undersigned groups, who supported enactment of the bipartisan Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act (P.L. 115-119), write to urge immediate and effective implementation of this law to help better recognize and support our country’s family caregivers. This is an issue that affects just about everyone. Most individuals are, have been, or will be a family caregiver or will need the help of one in the future.

Family caregivers are the backbone of services and supports in this country – they help loved ones of all ages live independently in their homes and communities where they want to be, helping to save taxpayer dollars by delaying and preventing more costly care and unnecessary hospitalizations. About 40 million family caregivers provide about $470 billion annually in unpaid care to their loved ones. About 3.7 million family caregivers provide care to a child under age 18 because of a medical, behavioral, or other condition or disability, and 6.5 million family caregivers assist both adults and children. Our country relies on the contributions family caregivers make and should recognize and support them. Family caregivers help with daily tasks such as eating, bathing, dressing, transportation, medical/nursing tasks such as managing multiple medications, managing finances, coordinating services, and much more. In doing so, they take on physical, emotional, and financial challenges.

The RAISE Family Caregivers Act requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a strategy to support family caregivers within 18 months of enactment. The law establishes an advisory council to bring together representatives from both the private and public sectors to advise and make recommendations. The law outlines specific timetables for action and deliverables. The strategy would identify recommended actions that communities, providers, government, and others are taking and may take to recognize and support family caregivers. The law would implement the federal Commission on Long-Term Care’s bipartisan recommendation that Congress require the development of a strategy to support family caregivers and is consistent with a 2016 recommendation by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine calling for a family caregiver strategy.

We are so pleased that this legislation passed Congress with strong bipartisan support and was signed into law by the President. Now, your leadership is important to the law’s successful implementation. We urge you to move forward with prompt implementation of the law. We stand ready to work with you and assist with implementation, and we appreciate your prompt attention to this important issue. Millions of individuals count on
family caregivers every day. Family caregivers are counting on implementation of this commonsense law.

Feel free to have your staff contact Rhonda Richards on AARP’s Government Affairs staff at rrichards@aarp.org or 202-434-3791 if you have any questions or need any additional information. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you to support our nation’s family caregivers.

Sincerely,

AARP

ACCSES

Allies for Independence

Altarum Program to Improve Eldercare

Alzheimer’s Association

Alzheimer’s Foundation of America

Alzheimer’s Impact Movement

American Academy of Nursing

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association on Health and Disability

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Geriatrics Society

American Health Care Association

American Heart Association

American Network of Community Options & Resources (ANCOR)

American Psychological Association

American Society on Aging

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

America’s Health Insurance Plans

Association of Oncology Social Work

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism Society of America

Autism Speaks

Cambia Health Solutions

Caregiver Action Network

Caregiver Voices United

Caring Across Generations

Center to Advance Palliative Care

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation

Coalition for Compassionate Care of California

Coalition to Transform Advanced Care (C-TAC)

Easterseals

Eldercare Workforce Alliance

Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Family Caregiver Alliance

Family Voices

Genworth Financial

Gerontological Society of America
cc: Deputy Secretary Hargan
    Assistant Secretary for Aging and ACL Administrator Robertson