

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you include \$14.22 million for Lifespan Respite Care Act programs. This number is consistent with the President's request to double funding for the Lifespan Respite Care Program in FY22.

Respite care provides temporary relief for family members engaged in the full-time task of caring for their family members who are aging or have disabilities. Family caregiving is always a balancing act, but over the past year caregivers have been juggling more than ever. From changing schedules to searching for PPE and adjusting to telework, family caregivers have met the challenges of the pandemic head-on. Whether tending to a mother with Alzheimer's disease, a husband injured in Afghanistan, or a child with autism, the more than 50 million family caregivers in the U.S. provide approximately 80 percent of long-term services and supports. In fact, according to a report issued by the AARP Public Policy Institute, the annual economic value of uncompensated family caregiving to the U.S. economy was estimated at \$470 billion in 2017, more than all out-of-pocket spending on US health care for that year.

Although the benefits of family caregiving are plentiful, it can take an emotional, mental and physical toll. Respite is the most frequently requested support service among family caregivers; however, the vast majority of family caregivers still go without respite care. Access to respite services has been shown to improve caregiver health and well-being; promote family stability; reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect; and avoid or delay the need for admission to costlier institutional settings, resulting in significant savings for the health care system and taxpayers.

The Lifespan Respite Care Program was created by Congress in 2006 as the only federal program to address respite issues for families regardless of age or disability and was reauthorized by the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. While some respite services are offered to certain populations through initiatives under the Department of Veterans Affairs and Medicaid, the lack of coordination and resources continues to impede access to these crucial supports. This program has already provided grants to 37 states and the District of Columbia to help coordinate federal, state and local resources; streamline the delivery of planned and emergency respite services; provide services for unserved groups; recruit

and train respite workers; and train caregivers themselves. For families and individuals who don't qualify for other public or private respite funding, these programs may be holding out the only helping hand. For wounded service members and veterans returning with traumatic brain injuries and other polytraumas, Lifespan Respite systems could be the lifeline their families must turn to in their new roles as life-long family caregivers. Further, Lifespan Respite is often the only open door for families affected by conditions and diseases with an earlier onset, like multiple sclerosis, since many existing respite programs have age restrictions and are targeted towards children or the aging.

With proper community supports like respite services, we can prevent the dramatic shift of these costs onto our health care system. The Lifespan Respite Care program is the only federal program that stands ready to meet these goals with funds for respite start-up, training, and coordination. We urge you to include \$14.22 million for Lifespan Respite Care Act programs in the FY22 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, and we look forward to working with you on cost-effective and proven ways to support our nation's family caregivers.

Sincerely,



Jim Langevin  
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

/s/

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

/s/

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

/s/

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

/s/

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

/s/

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

/s/

Antonio Delgado  
Member of Congress

/s/

Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress

/s/

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

/s/

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

/s/

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

/s/

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

/s/

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress