

# Bill to Support the Health and Wellbeing of Family Caregivers Signed into Law

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**Washington, D.C.** — Following unanimous passage by the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, the *Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act* has been signed into law. Authored by Representative Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), along with Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), this bipartisan legislation will support the health and wellbeing of family caregivers by authorizing \$10 million annually for the Lifespan Respite Care program from fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2024.

“I’m thrilled the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act has become law. Lifespan Respite Care programs help improve access to respite care services and help ease the burden on family caregivers,” **said Representative Langevin, who co-authored the Lifespan Respite Care Act that became law in 2006.** “Respite care is one of the most frequently reported unmet needs for millions of family caregivers, and this legislation will help make a difference with dedicated funding for programs that provide relief to families and their loved ones. I appreciate Senator Susan Collins, Senator Tammy Baldwin, Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, and our community partners for their support in getting this important legislation across the finish line.”

“In my conversations with family caregivers, I have found what they need most is respite care, a break from the 24/7 job of caregiving. Caregivers provide an estimated \$470 billion in uncompensated care each year. Yet, an astounding 85 percent of caregivers have not received any respite services at all,” **said Senator Collins.** “Respite care is essential to caregivers as it helps to reduce mental stress and physical health issues they may experience. This new law will give caregivers and their loved ones the support they need by ensuring that quality respite is available and accessible.”

“Every day, family caregivers in Wisconsin and across our country tend to the needs of their loved ones,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Although this work can be very rewarding, it can also be emotionally and physically challenging. I’m proud to see our bipartisan legislation signed into law so that our family caregivers can access the support and relief they need.”

“There are millions of people in America today providing care to loved ones with chronic, debilitating conditions. Respite care agencies provide these family caregivers with short-

term relief and serve as an essential part of a comprehensive health care approach,” **said Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers**. “Thank you to Rep. Jim Langevin for partnering on this bipartisan legislation to expand services and access to respite care and improve outcomes for people in Eastern Washington and all across the country. I’m proud to help get this bill signed into law.”

“The National Respite Coalition applauds Representative Jim Langevin, Senator Susan Collins, Senator Tammy Baldwin, and Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers for championing the Lifespan Respite Reauthorization Act to final passage. The pandemic has exacerbated the social isolation and economic insecurity felt by family caregivers and their loved ones, with devastating effects on their health and wellness. Respite may be their only lifeline,” **said Jill Kagan, Director of the ARCH National Respite Network**. “The Lifespan Respite Care Program, through very modest investments, allows states the flexibility and creativity to make sure family caregivers of children and adults are receiving quality respite services, even during COVID-19. The NRC stands ready to work with its partners and with our Congressional champions to make sure the program is fully funded and implemented.”

Respite care provides temporary relief to caregivers from their ongoing responsibilities. By protecting the health of caregivers, respite care decreases the need for professional long-term care and allows individuals who require care to remain at home. To date, 41 states have received funding through the Lifespan Respite Care program. The program provides competitive grants to states to establish or enhance statewide respite resources and help ensure that quality respite is available and accessible to all family caregivers.

The *Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2019* is endorsed by 100 leading caregiver and respite organizations, including AARP, the ARCH National Respite Coalition, Autism Society of America, the Arc, and the National Alliance for Caregiving. A group of 100 national, state, and local organizations across the country have submitted a letter of support.

There are 53 million family caregivers in the United States that provide an estimated \$470 billion in uncompensated care each year.