

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs Aderholt and Ranking Members DeLauro:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you include at least \$20 million for Lifespan Respite Care Act programs.

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 several years, caregivers have been juggling more than ever. They emerged from coping with the challenges of the pandemic to face a critical shortage of respite and home care providers to support them, all while juggling work and caregiving. Family caregivers have met the challenges head-on, but they need support and services to keep going. Whether tending to a mother with Alzheimer's disease, a husband injured in Afghanistan, or a child with autism, 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 \$600 billion in 2021, more than all out-of-pocket spending on U.S. 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 116th 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 38 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 the only available 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 at least \$20 million for Lifespan Respite Care Act programs in the FY25 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.

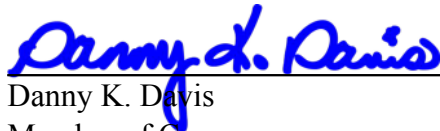
Sincerely,



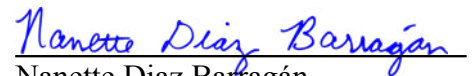
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



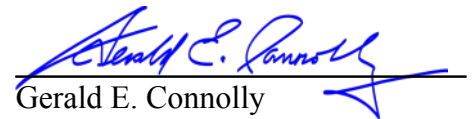
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress



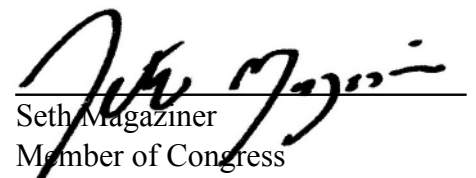
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



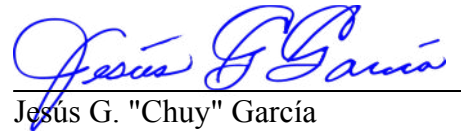
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