

December 10, 2015

The Honorable Jim Langevin
U.S. House of Representatives
109 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gregg Harper
U.S. House of Representatives
307 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Langevin and Representative Harper:

We, the undersigned national organizations representing all ages and disabilities, are writing to offer our fervent support for the **Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3913)** to reauthorize the Lifespan Respite Care Program at \$15 million a year for five years.

Every day, millions of American families are faced with unexpected illness, disease, or disability. A soldier is injured in war, a spouse develops multiple sclerosis or Alzheimer's disease, or a child is diagnosed with a developmental or physical disability or chronic illness. These are but a few examples of events that can forever change an individual's and family's trajectory.

While each situation is unique, the one thing that they often have in common is the incredible value of family caregivers. Forty-three million family caregivers provide a vast majority of our nation's long-term care, permitting individuals to remain in their communities and avoid or delay nursing home or foster care placements. AARP has estimated that family caregivers provide \$470 billion in uncompensated care annually, a staggering statistic that exceeds annual federal and state spending on Medicaid health services and long-term services and supports.

While the benefits of family caregiving are plentiful, caregiving can take its toll—with family caregivers experiencing higher mortality rates, rates of acute and chronic conditions, and depression than noncaregivers. Respite—short-term care that offers individuals or family members temporary relief from the daily routine and stress of providing care—is a critical component to bolstering family stability and maintaining family caregiver health and well-being. Respite is a frequently requested support service among family caregivers, but 85% of family caregivers receive no respite. Not surprisingly, high burden family caregivers (defined as those who assist their loved one with personal care such as getting dressed or bathing) cite lack of respite as one of their top three concerns.

To help provide family caregivers the support they need, the Lifespan Respite Care Program was enacted in 2006 with strong bipartisan support. The program provides competitive grants to states to establish or enhance statewide Lifespan Respite systems that maximize existing resources and help ensure that quality respite is available and

accessible to all family caregivers. With more than half of care recipients under age 75 and more than one-third under age 50, Lifespan Respite rightly recognizes caregiving as a lifespan issue and serves families regardless of age or disability.

Though the program has been drastically underfunded since its inception, thirty-three states and the District of Columbia have received grants and are engaged in impressive work such as identifying and coordinating respite services available through various state agencies, including veterans caregiver services; helping unserved families pay for respite through participant-directed voucher programs or mini-grants to community-based agencies; building respite capacity by recruiting and training respite workers and volunteers; and raising awareness about respite through public education campaigns. Originally authorized through Fiscal Year 2011, enactment of the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act is necessary to continue this excellent momentum, better coordinate and supply respite care to our nation's 43 million family caregivers through statewide Lifespan Respite programs, and ensure that states are able to sustain the great work they have begun and still allow new states to receive a grant.

We thank you for your commitment to individuals living with disabilities and the loved ones who care for them and we look forward to continuing to work with you as the bill moves forward. If you would like more information, please contact Jill Kagan at jkagan@archrespite.org.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

Alzheimer's Foundation of America

American Association on Health and Disability

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for the Blind

American Music Therapy Association

American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)

American Nurses Association

American Psychological Association

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism Speaks

Brain Injury Association of America

Caregiver Action Network

Caring Across Generations

Center for Elder Care and Advanced Illness, Altarum Institute

Child Neurology Society

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation

Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on Caregiving
Family Voices
Generations United
Lakeshore Foundation
LeadingAge
Lupus Foundation of America
Lutheran Services in America Disability Network
Madison House Autism Foundation
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Respite Coalition
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
Parkinson's Action Network
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Sibling Leadership Network
Parent to Parent USA
Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving
The Elizabeth Dole Foundation
The Jewish Federations of North America
The ALS Association
The Arc
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association

Well Spouse Association