

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2007

Dear Colleague:

On behalf of our nation's family caregivers, we urge you to join us in sending the attached letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services and Education, requesting \$40 million in funding for the *Lifespan Respite Care Act* programs in FY 2008 appropriations.

Chronic illnesses are the fastest growing illnesses in our country today, and older adults are the fastest growing population. Consequently, long-term care is increasingly important for our nation's health and constitutes a significant portion of Medicaid and Medicare spending. In 2004, approximately \$160 billion was spent on formal long-term care services; 42 percent paid for by Medicaid and 20 percent paid for by Medicare. This is compared to the \$137 billion spent on formal long-term care in 2000.

However, a substantial amount of our nation's long term care is voluntarily provided by family caregivers and is often unpaid. Family caregiving accounts for 80 percent of the long-term care provided in the United States at a value of more than \$300 billion annually.

Respite care, which provides temporary relief from continuous caregiving, decreases the likelihood of formal long-term care, thereby resulting in significant savings for the health care system and taxpayers. Access to respite services has also been shown to help improve caregiver health and well-being, promote family stability, avoid or delay more costly out-of-home placements, and reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect.

Last December, Congress and the Administration sent a clear message of support to family caregivers with the enactment of the Lifespan Respite Care Act. Through competitive grants, the Lifespan Respite Care Act offers states the opportunity to expand access to respite care, improve local coordination of services, and help families obtain information on respite provider options and payment plans.

Enactment of this legislation is the culmination of many years of bipartisan effort and will have a significant impact on our nation's caregivers. We encourage you to join us in supporting family caregivers by signing onto the attached letter. Please contact Amy Judge in Congressman Langevin's office at 5-2735 or amy.judge@mail.house.gov or Tom Fussaro in Congressman Ferguson's office at 5-5361 or tom.fussaro@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,


Jim Langevin
Member of Congress


Mike Ferguson
Member of Congress

March __, 2007

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

As your Subcommittee prepares to mark up the FY 2008 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill, we ask that the House include the authorized level of funding, \$40 million, for the *Lifespan Respite Care Act* programs in FY 2008 appropriations.

Chronic illnesses are the fastest growing illnesses in our country today, and older adults are the fastest growing population. Consequently, long-term care is increasingly important for our nation's health and constitutes a significant portion of Medicaid and Medicare spending. In 2004, approximately \$160 billion was spent on formal long-term care services; 42 percent paid for by Medicaid and 20 percent paid for by Medicare. This is compared to the \$137 billion spent on formal long-term care in 2000.

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Enactment of this legislation is the culmination of many years of bipartisan effort and will have a significant impact on our nation's caregivers. We look forward to working with you on ways to support the approximately 26 million family caregivers in the United States.