

September 29, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell,

On behalf of more than 53 million family caregivers in the United States and the undersigned organizations, we write in support of the Paid Family and Medical Leave provisions included in the FY 2022 Budget Reconciliation Proposal that was recently approved by Ways and Means Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. We appreciate that Chairman Richard Neal and Committee Members approved a comprehensive, universal, paid family and medical leave plan for all of America's workers—including caregivers of older adults and people with disabilities.

We urge Congress to advance this needed program that provides paid leave benefits which:

- Cover comprehensive qualifying leave including caregiving responsibilities across the lifespan;
- Remain inclusive of and available to all American workers including part-time, self-employed, and gig workers; and
- Are of a sufficient size and duration to ensure that beneficiaries will not face the impossible choice of caring for themselves or their family or maintaining financial stability.

Additionally, we urge Congress ensure that a universal paid leave program be implemented and integrated to complement, not compete with or harm, existing programs, and policies that tens of millions of older adults and people with disabilities depend on to maintain their quality of life and financial wellbeing.

The case for a national paid leave program that supports the invaluable contributions of America's family caregivers remains clear. An estimated one in five Americans—more than 50

million people—is a family caregiver. Family caregivers serve as the foundation of the country’s long-term services and supports (LTSS) system by helping older adults and people with disabilities or chronic conditions manage their health and wellness. According to a 2017 report by AARP, family caregivers contribute an estimated 34 billion hours, a value of roughly \$470 billion, in supporting those who rely on them each year in the U.S. This unpaid workforce underpins our long-term services and supports system, helping older adults and people with disabilities or chronic conditions who cannot access long term services and supports to manage their health and wellness.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and resulting health and economic crisis have only exacerbated the myriad challenges with which millions of caregivers grapple. Often facing the need to isolate or take leave to care for family members, scrambling to fill gaps in care as many older adults and people with disabilities lost access to services, the need for a national paid leave program that includes caregivers is even more clear.

This challenge is particularly difficult for women of color. More than 2.3 million women—more than 600,000 Black and 618,000 Latina—left the labor force in 2020 during the pandemic. Further, one in five (nineteen percent) of the older workers who voluntarily left the workforce during the pandemic did so earlier than planned because they had to care for an ill spouse or other family member.

The time is now for lawmakers to enact a national paid leave program that begins to alleviate the struggle of family caregivers to balance caregiving and workplace responsibilities. Unfortunately, the United States remains one of only a few industrialized countries without a paid family leave policy to guarantee that workers can take the time they need to care for family members—a reality that inherently threatens the economic, physical, and emotional health of millions of Americans who are family caregivers as well as the millions of Americans who rely on a caregiver for their wellbeing.

Collectively, we understand that Congress has an opportunity and responsibility to enact a comprehensive, national paid family and medical leave program that will ensure Americans are not forced to choose between their finances and their families. A national policy on paid leave will help alleviate challenges facing working family caregivers who often struggle to be in two places at once: at home providing daily critical care needs to those who rely on them and at work supporting their employees and co-workers and earning an income.

The undersigned organizations express our support Chairman Neal’s proposal to create a flexible, comprehensive, and inclusive paid leave policy and we stand ready to help advance a meaningful, national paid leave policy through the remainder of the reconciliation process. We look forward to working with Congressional Leaders and champions to help build our nation’s care economy. For more information, contact Mike Wittke at mike@caregiving.org or Stephanie Monroe at Smonroe@usagainstalzheimers.org.

Sincerely,

UsAgainstAlzheimer's
The National Alliance for Caregiving
Alzheimer's Orange County
AARP
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer's Los Angeles
American Geriatrics Society
American Society on Aging
APWU Retirees Department
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism Society of America
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network
Barth Syndrome Foundation
Caregiver Action Network
Caregivers on the Homefront
Caring Across Generations
CaringKind, The Heart of Alzheimer's Caregiving
Center to Advance Palliative Care
Community Catalyst
Easterseals
Elizabeth Dole Foundation
FORCE - Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
From The Bottom Up Foundation, Inc
Fund for Community Reparations for Autistic People of Color's Interdependence, Survival, & Empowerment
Genetic Alliance
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.
Hawaii Family Caregiver Coalition

HealthyWomen

HFC

Justice in Aging

Latinos For A Secure Retirement

Lewy Body Dementia Association

LuMind IDSC Foundation

Medicare Rights Center

National Association for Hispanic Elderly

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

National Certification Council for Activity Professionals

National Council on Aging

National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.

National Patient Advocate Foundation

National Respite Coalition

North Carolina Serious Illness Coalition

Ohio Council for Cognitive Health

PHI

PXE International

Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers

The Balm In Gilead, Inc

The Gerontological Society of America

The Global Foundation for Peroxisomal Disorders

The North Carolina Serious Illness Coalition

Triage Cancer

Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement

CC: The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Mike Crapo, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Richard Neal, Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means