



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
900 COURT ST NE  
SALEM, OR 97301

April 19, 2017

Dear Chair Gelser and members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

I am writing in support of HJM 4. A few quick bullets for your consideration:

- Family caregivers
  - Family caregivers enable older adults and people with disabilities of all ages to remain living in their homes and communities by helping with activities of daily living.
  - They are the backbone of the long-term care system.
  - In Oregon, an estimated 469,000 family caregivers provide about 437 million hours of unpaid care each year with an estimated value of \$5.7 billion.
  - 60% of caregivers are women with an average age of 49. In addition to their family caregiving responsibilities, 56% of caregivers work full time.
  - Caregivers often experience emotional and physical difficulties due to caregiving, especially those caring for family with dementia.
  
- Respite care
  - Respite care provides temporary relief from the intensive demands experienced by family caregivers.
  - It includes in-home paid care, adult day services, and overnight stays in a long-term care setting.
  - Research demonstrates that respite services reduce the stresses of caregiving and improve well-being for both family caregivers and the people for whom they care.
  - Barriers to caregivers seeking and using respite care include lack of awareness, personal resistance to seeking outside help, lack of affordability, and shortages of high-quality providers.
  
- Caregiver respite services in Oregon
  - Two major programs (other than Medicaid) provide respite to caregivers: The Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP), which is federally funded under the Older Americans Act, and Oregon Project Independence (OPI), which is state funded.
  - FCSP is focused on the well-being of the caregiver. FCSP provides support to family caregivers of adults age 60 and older, as well as people providing care to people of any age with Alzheimer's disease, and a few other specific caregiving situations.
  - OPI covers services which offer temporary, substitute supports or living arrangements for care recipients which provide a brief period of relief for caregivers. Funds are



extremely limited, wait lists exist based on priority, and respite is at the bottom of that priority list.

Because the need for respite was a recurring theme in the State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease in Oregon, in the SB 21 workgroup, and in the White House Conference on Aging, AARP convened stakeholders to craft an action plan to determine what can be done in Oregon.

AARP held a summit in April, which was attended by over 70 stakeholders from around the state. About 25 people then formed a workgroup to craft the recommendations. It then held 14 community meetings across Oregon last summer.

A report written in November with 15 recommendations is on OLIS concerning the expansion of Adult Day Care Centers, goals for workforce development through community colleges, suggestions for how employers can be supportive of its employees who do caregiving, changes to the health care system, and funding recommendations.

Another element of HJM 4 is to **urge Congress to pass the RAISE Family Caregivers Act**. RAISE is an acronym for Recognize, Assist, Include, Support and Engage. In the last Congress, there was a Senate version and a House version. This bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop, maintain, and periodically update a National Family Caregiving Strategy, something that is long overdue.

S 1719 had five Republican sponsors (introduced by Sen. Collins of Maine) and seven Democratic sponsors. It passed the Senate on a unanimous voice vote in December of 2015.

HR 3099 had a total of 127 cosponsors (78 Democrat, 49 Republican), and the chief sponsor was Rep. Harper, R of Mississippi. Three of Oregon's five members were sponsors. However, it never had a hearing in its House committee.

We expect that this legislation will be reintroduced soon in the new Congress that just convened.

HJM 4 urges Congress to pass the RAISE Family Caregivers Act, and shows appreciation for the work of the Oregon Caregiver Respite Work Group, and that the legislature will consider its recommendations. I urge your support!



Alissa Keny-Guyer