

From the Desk of
Senator
Tim Knopp

Please Vote Yes on HJM 4 to Honor and Support Oregon's Family Caregivers

The undersigned organizations and businesses are pleased to support House Joint Memorial 4. This proposal honors the hard work and sacrifices of family caregivers in Oregon, the efforts by the Oregon Caregiver Respite Work Group, and urges Congress to pass the RAISE Family Caregivers Act.

Family caregivers make it possible for older adults and people with disabilities of all ages to remain living in their homes and communities. They are informal caregivers who provide unpaid care to a relative or friend, often helping with activities of daily living such as eating and dressing. In Oregon, an estimated 470,000 family caregivers provide about 437 million hours of unpaid care each year with an estimated value of \$5.7 billion.

For many caregivers, the demands of caregiving can cause stress or loneliness, and may even cause a decline in their own health. Caregivers often report an increased incidence of emotional and physical difficulties in their personal life. Further, the longer a caregiver has been providing care, the more likely she or he is to report poor health. Research demonstrates that respite services reduce the stresses of caregiving and improve well-being for both family caregivers and the older adults for whom they provide care.

In 2016, the Oregon Caregiver Respite Work Group formed to find ways to improve access to and effective use of respite in Oregon. After 14 community input sessions across Oregon, the Work Group crafted a strategy to help caregivers get the breaks they need. The Work Group's final report was published in November 2016 and work has begun to achieve the recommendations. The full report can be downloaded at action.aarp.org/oregonrespite.

The RAISE Family Caregivers Act directs the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a National Family Caregiving Strategy. In the last Congress, the Senate bill passed on a unanimous voice vote in December of 2015. The House bill had a total of 127 cosponsors (78 Democrat, 49 GOP) but never had a hearing. We expect that this legislation will be reintroduced soon in the new Congress.

HJM 4 urges Congress to pass the RAISE Family Caregivers Act, shows appreciation for the work of the Oregon Caregiver Respite Work Group, and that the legislature will consider the recommendations of it. And most of all, HJM 4 recognizes the sacrifices, compassion, and hard work of Oregon's family caregivers. We ask for your support for HJM 4.

