

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 12, 2018

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On January 22, 2018, the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage, or RAISE Family Caregivers Act (P.L. 115-119) was signed into law. This new law would formally recognize and support the millions of family caregivers who are overlooked in our health care system. As authors of this important bipartisan measure, we request that you prioritize this by beginning swift, comprehensive and thoughtful implementation of the law to ensure that our older adults and loved ones with disabilities receive the highest quality care possible in their own homes.

Now and in the future, family caregivers will continue to be the most important sources of support and an invaluable resource to our society, devoting enormous time and attention and making many personal and financial sacrifices to care for their loved ones. As Americans turn 65, as many as 90 percent of them have one or more chronic health conditions. They are most at risk for multiple and interacting health problems that can lead to disability and the need for round-the-clock care. The brunt of that care has and will continue to fall on family caregivers who are the safety net in our aging society. In addition, the economic impact of family caregivers is enormous. It is estimated that in 2013, more than 40 million family caregivers provided \$470 billion in uncompensated long-term care.

The primary goals of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act are to develop a coordinated plan to leverage existing resources, promote innovation and promising practices, and provide our nation's family caregivers with much-needed recognition and support. The RAISE Family Caregivers Act has two major components:

- 1. Family Caregiving Advisory Council.** The law creates a Family Caregiving Advisory Council, comprised of federal and non-federal members with experience and expertise in family caregiving issues. It will include a diverse membership of family caregivers, older adults with long-term care needs, individuals with disabilities, experts in family caregiving, advocates for family caregivers, state and local officials, and the heads of Federal departments or agencies (or their designees) that oversee labor and workforce, economic, government financial policies, community service.
- 2. Family Caregiving Strategy.** The law directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to create a Family Caregiving Strategy to support family caregivers within 18 months of enactment. The Secretary will consider the recommendations and expertise from the Family Caregiving Advisory Council in developing the national Strategy.

It is essential for the Family Caregiving Advisory Council to be established immediately in order to give timely advice to the Secretary to inform the national Strategy and to publish a report within the first year of the law's enactment. We urge you to begin the process of seeking nominations for the Council and to ensure that the members of the Council adequately represent the broad and varied set of voices of our country's family caregiver landscape.

The value of family caregivers and the importance of supporting them will only increase in the years to come. We are committed to working with you to support meaningful implementation of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act. Please advise us on the steps you are taking to swiftly implement this law. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Khasawinah with Senator Collins at Sarah_Khasawinah@aging.senate.gov or 202-224-5365, Kathleen Laird with Senator Baldwin at Kathleen_Laird@baldwin.senate.gov or 202-224-5653, Scot Malvaney with Representative Harper at Scot.Malvaney@mail.house.gov or 202-225-5031, and Elizabeth Brown at Elizabeth.Brown@mail.house.gov or 202-225-3376 with Representative Castor.

Thank you for supporting our family caregivers, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Gregg Harper
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress