

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2008

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2358-B 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 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill, we ask that the House include the fully authorized level of funding, \$53.3 million, for the *Lifespan Respite Care Act* programs in fiscal year (FY) 2009.

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 2005, approximately \$207 billion was spent on professional long-term care services; 49 percent paid for by Medicaid and 20 percent paid for by Medicare. This is compared to the \$137 billion spent on professional 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 overall 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, 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.

In December 2006, 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 look forward to working with you on ways to support the approximately 50 million family caregivers in the United States.

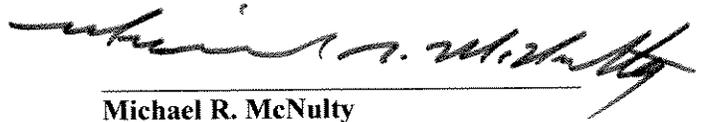
Sincerely,


James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

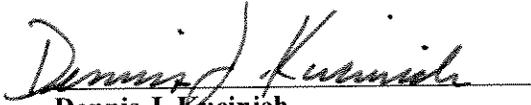

Mike Ferguson
Member of Congress



Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress



Michael R. McNulty
Member of Congress



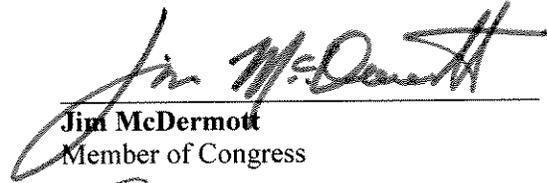
Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress



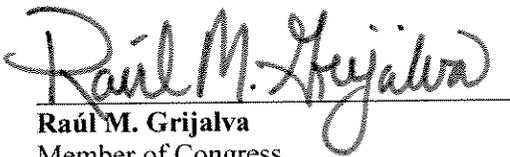
William D. Delahunt
Member of Congress



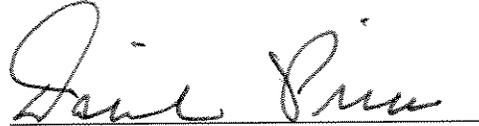
Robert Wexler
Member of Congress



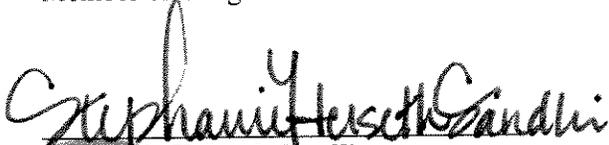
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



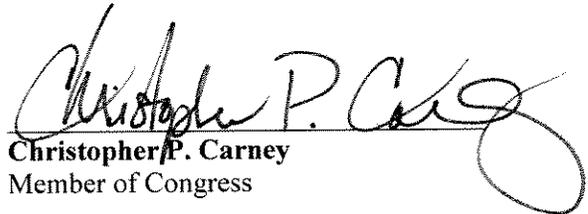
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



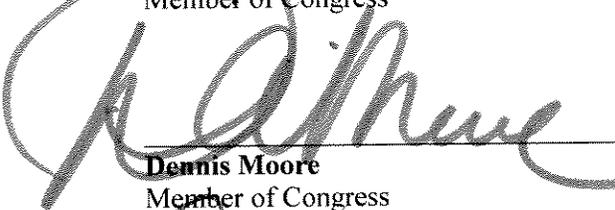
David E. Price
Member of Congress



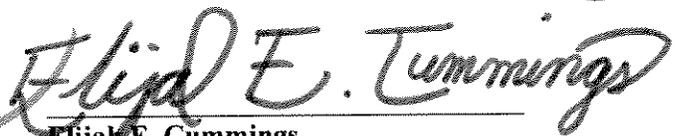
Stephanie Herseth Sandlin
Member of Congress



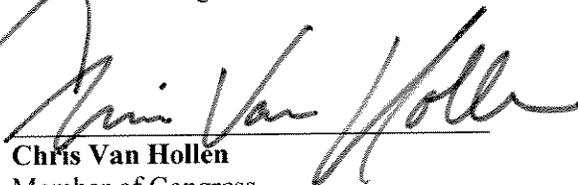
Christopher P. Carney
Member of Congress



Dennis Moore
Member of Congress



Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



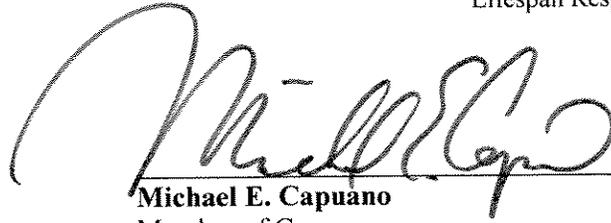
Todd Russell Platts
Member of Congress



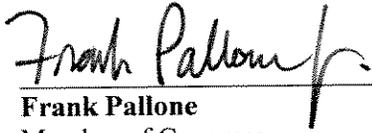
Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress



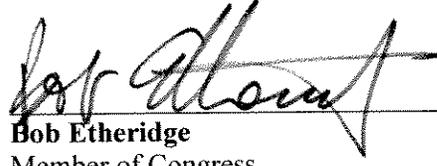
Thomas H. Allen
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone
Member of Congress



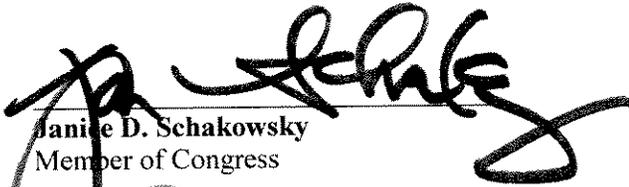
Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress



Dale E. Kildee
Member of Congress



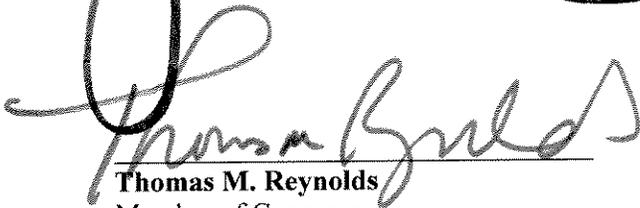
John Barrow
Member of Congress



Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Frank A. LoBiondo
Member of Congress



Thomas M. Reynolds
Member of Congress



David G. Reichert
Member of Congress