

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Senate committee advances bipartisan bill to support the health and wellbeing of family caregivers

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee voted to advance legislation introduced by U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Susan Collins (R-ME) to support the health and wellbeing of family caregivers. The *Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2019* now heads to the floor for consideration by the full Senate. Senators Baldwin and Collins are members of the Senate HELP Committee.

This bipartisan bill would authorize \$10 million annually for the Lifespan Respite Care program from fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2024.

“Every day, family caregivers in Wisconsin and across our country tend to the needs of their loved ones,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Although this work can be very rewarding, it can also be emotionally and physically challenging. I’m proud to see my bipartisan legislation with Senator Collins pass out of the Senate HELP Committee. Together, we’re going to help ensure continued funding for the Lifespan Respite Care Program so that our family caregivers can access the support and relief they need.”

“In my conversations with family caregivers, I have found what they need most is respite care, a break from the 24/7 job of caregiving. Caregivers provide an estimated \$470 billion in uncompensated care each year. Yet, an astounding 85

percent of caregivers have not received any respite services at all,” **said Senator Collins**. “Respite care is essential to caregivers as it helps to reduce mental stress and physical health issues they may experience. I am pleased that our bipartisan bill was approved by the Senate Health Committee today, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this important legislation to give family caregivers and their loved ones the support they need by ensuring that quality respite is available and accessible.”

Respite care provides temporary relief to caregivers from their ongoing responsibilities. By protecting the health of caregivers, respite care decreases the need for professional long-term care and allows individuals who require care to remain at home. To date, 37 states have received funding through the Lifespan Respite Care program. The program provides competitive grants to states to establish or enhance statewide respite resources and help ensure that quality respite is available and accessible to all family caregivers.

The *Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2019* is endorsed by 32 leading caregiver and respite organizations, including AARP, the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center, Autism Society of America, the Arc, and the National Alliance for Caregiving.

In Wisconsin, the bipartisan legislation is supported by the [Respite Care Association of Wisconsin](#), the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (WI-BPDD), Autism Society of Wisconsin, and The Arc Wisconsin.

**Lisa Schneider, Executive Director of Respite Care Association of Wisconsin, stated**, “A recent survey conducted by the Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance of over 500 unpaid family caregivers throughout the state reflected seventy-two percent (72%) of unpaid family caregivers reported being tired/worn out a lot of the time; sixty-four percent (64%) reported their social life has decreased; a whopping ninety percent (90%) indicated their emotional and/or physical health has worsened as a result of caregiving.” **Schneider further added**, “We are in the midst of a direct care workforce crisis and the Lifespan Respite Care Program is vital to efforts like ours in increasing the pool of a trained, quality, direct care workforce.”

“Respite care is a critical public health intervention. The effects of round-the-clock caregiving often lead the caregiver to feel isolated, fatigued, depressed, and anxious. The mental health toll on primary caregivers often exacerbates physical health conditions. Data shows that caregivers report chronic health conditions, including heart attack/heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and arthritis, at nearly twice the rate of non-caregivers. With the notion of pay now or pay later, we must move forward with increased funding to provide primary caregivers a break from their duties, so they can rest, refresh, and recharge,” **said Rachel Watkins-Petersen, Project Manager with Respite Care Association of Wisconsin.**

There are 45 million family caregivers in the United States that provide an estimated \$470 billion in uncompensated care each year.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).