

AARP: Pleased with task force support for WI's unpaid family caregivers

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Madison, Wisconsin - AARP Wisconsin is voicing full support for recommendations made public today by the [Governor's Task Force on Caregiving](#) that call for increased support for Wisconsin's nearly 600,000 unpaid family caregivers.

Specifically, AARP points to two proposals that would provide immediate help for unpaid family caregivers - the Wisconsin Credit for Caring Act and the Caregiver Advise, Record, and Enable (CARE) Act, which would help family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home.

AARP also supports improvements to the Family Medical Leave Act, expanding it to cover caregiving, as well as task force recommendations affecting the paid caregiving work force, which provides much-needed care for loved ones in Wisconsin's long-term care facilities.

The report, titled "[Wisconsin Caregivers in Crisis: Investing in our Future](#)", includes 16 recommendations to support and strengthen the direct care workforce, increase access to needed care, enhance supports for family caregivers, and improve the quality of caregiving.

"We are thrilled to see that the task force understands just how critically important it is to support Wisconsin's nearly 600,000 unpaid family caregivers, who are giving up so much of their own time and money to help their loved ones remain living

independently in their own homes and communities as long as possible,” said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson.

“These family caregivers are the lifeblood of Wisconsin’s long-term care system and it is high time we not only recognize this, but provide them with the support and resources they need to continue this heroic work. We firmly believe the recommendations of the task force do exactly that,” Wilson said.

The Wisconsin Credit For Caring Act would create a \$1,000 nonrefundable individual income tax credit for certain expenses incurred by a family caregiver to assist a qualified family member. The CARE Act would require hospitals to:

- 1). Engage with caregivers by recording the name of the family caregiver when a loved one is admitted into the hospital.
- 2). Keep a family caregiver informed on major decisions like transferring or discharging the patient.
- 3). Provide instructions on the medical tasks the family caregiver may need to perform once the patient is home.

Last November AARP Wisconsin released the results of a statewide caregiving survey showing that nearly nine in ten Wisconsin registered voters (89%) age 40 and older support the creation of a state income tax credit to help family caregivers who incur expenses for the care and support of a loved one.

The survey also showed that more than eight in ten respondents would support components in CARE Act. This survey was designed to understand the experiences of family caregiving and support for legislative policies to help caregivers.

AARP Wisconsin State Advocacy Director Helen Marks Dicks, who is a member of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving, is optimistic that both the Wisconsin Credit For Caring Act and CARE ACT will pass into law in the next legislative session,

as family caregiving is a bipartisan issue that impacts nearly everyone at some point in their lives.

“Each year, Wisconsin’s unpaid family caregivers provide about 538 million hours of care to their parents, spouses, partners, and other adult loved ones,” Dicks said. “In addition, they spend an average of \$7,000 per year on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving. They provide this care while also keeping up with their own jobs, running their own households and trying to make ends meet.

“Caregivers do all of this while Wisconsinites are getting older, with thousands of Boomers retiring each day and fewer home health care workers available to take care of them. That’s why we at AARP believe that making small investments in caregivers right now will lead to big savings for Wisconsin and much better care for families down the road,” Dicks said.

Family caregivers put in long hours helping loved ones with tasks such as giving baths, dispensing medications, preparing meals, paying bills, and providing transportation to doctor’s appointments. Some even provide higher levels of care, such as wound treatment, dialysis support and feeding tube maintenance.

More than 40 million Americans take on these challenges every day so that family members, relatives or friends can remain living independently as long as possible in their own homes and communities rather than being moved into costly long-term care institutions, Dicks said.

“It’s high time we step up our game and do more to assist these heroes. We hope lawmakers will clearly understand that this tax credit and the CARE Act are important first steps to providing this critical support,” Wilson said.