

U.S. Sen. Baldwin's bipartisan bill to support the health and wellbeing of family caregivers passed unanimously

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Senate unanimously passed bipartisan legislation Monday night authored by 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 awaits consideration by the U.S. House of Representatives.

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 win approval from the full Senate. 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. With Senate passage of our bill, we

are one step closer to giving family caregivers and their loved ones the support they need by ensuring that quality respite is available and accessible.”

“Respite programs are essential and should be expanded. Some caretakers are with their loved ones 24 hours a day. This can be exhausting and lead to poor health for the caretakers and is not helpful for the individual. This law helps families stay together and avoid costly out of home placements,” **said Scott Badesch, Executive Director and CEO of the Autism Society of America.** “The Autism Society thanks Senators Collins and Baldwin for their leadership on this bipartisan bill to reauthorize this law.”

“The ARCH National Respite Coalition applauds the Senate for passage of the Lifespan Respite Reauthorization Act. We are especially grateful to Senator Collins and Senator Baldwin for championing respite for family caregivers and for ensuring swift Senate action. Respite has been shown to help alleviate caregiving stress, improve family well-being, and avoid or delay more costly out-of-home placements. The Lifespan Respite Care Program has made respite more available to thousands of family caregivers who would not have had access otherwise. The program’s flexibility is allowing States to develop innovative solutions to advance access to respite at a time when the need is escalating rapidly. We pledge to work with Senators Collins and Baldwin to make Lifespan Respite available in every state,” **said Jill Kagan, Director of the ARCH National Respite Coalition.**

[A group of 100 national, state and local caregiver and respite organizations](#) across the country have endorsed the *Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2019*, including AARP, the National Respite Coalition, Autism Society of America, the Arc, and the National Alliance for Caregiving. In Wisconsin, the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc., Inclusa, and the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin support the legislation.

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.

There are 45 million family caregivers in the United States that provide an

estimated \$470 billion in uncompensated care each year.