



## SUPPORT FEDERAL EFFORTS TO HELP FAMILY CAREGIVERS

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) urges members of Congress to support family caregivers by cosponsoring **the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act (H.R. 3099)**, **the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3913)**, and **the Credit for Care Act (H.R. 4708 and S.2759)**. Millions of family caregivers across this country are the most important source of support for people with chronic or other health conditions, disabilities or functional limitations, such as older adults and younger people with disabilities. The responsibilities and financial burdens of providing this degree of support impose a significant hardship on family caregivers. JFNA believes that the quality of life for older adults and people with disabilities is directly linked to the health and well-being of their caregivers and, therefore, we support sensible federal initiatives to help alleviate some of that burden.

The RAISE Family Caregivers Act, the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act and the Credit for Caring Act are proposing common sense steps to better support family caregivers. **JFNA asks that Members of Congress cosponsor H.R. 3099, H.R. 3913 and H.R. 4708/S.2759, and urge their prompt passage.**

### Family Caregivers Provide Critical Support for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

- Family caregivers help perform many of the activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing, dressing, transporting, managing finances, and providing health care and care coordination.
- ***In 2013, approximately 40 million family caregivers nationwide provided care valued at about \$470 billion – more than total Medicaid spending that year -- to adults who needed help with their daily activities.*** An additional 3.7 million family caregivers performed these services for a child under age 18 because of a medical, behavioral, or other condition or disability.
- Seven out of 10 caregivers are doing so for loved ones over 50 years of age at home and in their communities; 16.8 million people care for a loved one with special needs.

### Family Caregivers Face Enormous Challenges

- Being a family caregiver can consume a great deal of physical, mental, and emotional energy. Nearly three quarters (72%) of family caregivers report not going to the doctor as often as they should. In addition, 20% of employed female caregivers over the age of 50 report symptoms of depression, compared to 8% of their non-caregiving peers. ***The divorce rate for parental caregivers of children with disabilities is between 80% and 90%.***
- In terms of balancing caregiving and jobs, family caregivers struggle greatly. ***Sixty percent of family caregivers juggle work outside the home and caregiving responsibilities, but many must quit their jobs because of the lack of workplace flexibility necessary for them to meet their caregiving obligations.*** Family caregivers age 50 and older who leave the workforce to care for a parent lose an average of \$304,000 in wages and benefits over their lifetime; and women generally lose more than men.

- Family caregivers often pay out of their own pockets for services to their loved ones. Although some public support has been provided to caregivers, more assistance, training and information is needed.

### **Congress Should Pass the RAISE Family Caregiver Act**

- Now pending before the House Education and Workforce Committee, the RAISE Family Caregiver Act (H.R. 3099) was introduced by Representatives Gregg Harper (R-MS) and Kathy Castor (D-FL). The Senate companion bill, S. 1719, already passed the Senate by Unanimous Consent on December 8, 2015.
- The legislation would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a *National Caregiving Strategy* in conjunction with an advisory council made up of people with disabilities, older adults, family caregivers, direct support professionals, and government officials. Among the range of issues to be considered are workplace policies, training and support for caregivers, respite services, as well as information and referral services and other aspects of caregiving.
- The bipartisan National Commission on Long-Term Care also called for a national strategy on family caregiving.
- JFNA believes this comprehensive examination of the challenges and needs of caregivers will result in the development of best practices and policies in this area.

### **Congress Should Reauthorize the Lifespan Respite Care Program**

- The Lifespan Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3913) would allow for continued funding of respite services for caregivers of all individuals with disabilities, including disabilities acquired later in life. Respite care provides caregivers a temporary break from their caregiving responsibilities. Introduced by Representatives Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Gregg Harper (R-MS), the bill is pending before the House Energy and Commerce
- Congress initially appropriated \$3.36 million for the Lifespan Respite Care Act; these funds are now helping states provide a wide variety of critical respite services, including in-home respite services or respite at respite care centers or provider-owned dwellings within communities. This legislation would reauthorize the program at \$15 million per year from 2016 through 2020.
- JFNA believes that respite care is essential to ensuring an adequate quality of life for caregivers.

### **Congress Should Pass the Credit for Caring Act**

- The Credit for Caring Act (H.R. 4709/S. 2759), introduced by Representatives Tom Reed (R-NY) and Linda Sanchez (D-CA) and Senators Joni Ernst (R-IA), Michael Bennett (D-CO) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), would help address the financial hardship of caregiving by providing a new, non-refundable federal tax credit of up to \$3,000 to family caregivers.
- The tax credit would help working family caregivers remain employed and avoid risking their financial security, but would phase out at higher income levels. Family caregivers would be eligible to receive the tax credit contingent on the care recipient meeting certain functional or cognitive limitations, or other requirements. Reflecting the fact that many family caregivers do not reside with the loved one they are assisting, family caregivers would not be required to live with the care recipient. Family caregivers could include spouses and others, and caregivers must have earned income for the taxable year of over \$7,500.