

LCAO Supports Family Caregivers Tax Credit Proposal

May 7, 2003

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

We the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) are writing in support of your proposed legislation to establish a tax credit of up to \$5,000 for family caregivers for the costs of providing care for individuals with long-term care or chronic care needs.

Millions of American families are experiencing enormous caregiving burdens. Almost all caregivers incur financial costs to help the care recipient with expenses, most frequently with food, transportation, and medications. On average, caregivers spend an estimated \$20,000 in out-of-pocket expenses. The lack of caregiver support also harms our nation's productivity. According to a MetLife study, the aggregate cost of caregiving in lost productivity to U.S. business may exceed \$29 billion per year. According to another survey, of those caregivers who had been in the labor force, 18 percent had quit their jobs to give care; 42 percent reduced their work hours; and 58 percent showed clinically significant symptoms of depression.

The issue is particularly important to middle-aged women. Women comprise more than 80 percent of the family caregivers for chronically ill older Americans. The average caregiver is a 57 year old married woman. It's about time middle class, sandwich generation caregivers got some help.

Your tax credit proposal would provide much-needed help in alleviating the tremendous burdens that millions of families face in trying to care for loved ones who are unable to help themselves. Coverage for chronic illness is the biggest gap in our nation's health care system. Currently, if a person has a long-term chronic illness, they are forced to exhaust their life savings before receiving any assistance. We can do better for America's families.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. We stand ready to assist in any way possible to enact the Family Caregivers Tax Credit proposal.

AFSCME Retirees
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer's Association
American Association for International Aging
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in
Historically Black Colleges and Universities
American Society on Aging
B'nai B'rith International
International Union, UAW
Military Officers Association of America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

National Adult Day Services Association
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors
National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on the Aging
National Senior Citizens Law Center
Older Women's League
United Jewish Communities