



National Alliance for Caregiving

Celebrating 15 Years of Empowering Family Caregivers

July 27, 2011

Senator Herb Kohl
Chair, Special Committee on Aging
G31 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl,

On behalf of the National Alliance for Caregiving, I strongly support the Strengthening Services for America's Seniors Act. Among its many provisions to support older adults, this bill recognizes that the family members and friends who provide care to older and disabled adults also require and deserve support services and training.

There are 65.7 million family caregivers in the U.S., providing informal care valued at \$450 billion, according to AARP. With the aging of the population, those numbers are only going to grow as the need for caregiving and long-term care services increases. Unfortunately, given the many demands of providing care, caregivers often experience adverse consequences on their health and well-being, including higher levels of stress, depression and chronic conditions. It is important that caregivers receive services and support to help them remain healthy and able to maintain their caregiving role.

This bill establishes a voluntary program of grants for states to systematically assess the needs of those who are caring for an older or disabled family member, friend or neighbor. Caregiver assessments are critical in order to identify those services and supports that can help caregivers stay physically and emotionally healthy, as well as provide training and education to help them become better caregivers. By requiring that assessments include referrals to appropriate services and follow-up, this bill has the potential to improve the lives of thousands of family caregivers in different states. In addition, the data collected and aggregated from the assessments will be invaluable for further understanding how to meet the diverse needs of family caregivers.

The National Alliance for Caregiving is a nonprofit coalition of national organizations focused on family caregiving, including grassroots organizations, professional associations, service organizations, disease-specific organizations, two government agencies, and corporations. The Alliance serves as a national resource, engaging in research, policy analysis, coalition building and other activities focused on improving the quality of life for families and care recipients.

Thank you for your commitment to older adults and their caregivers. We look forward to working with you further to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Gail Hunt
President & CEO