



## **Moving the Needle to Eliminate the Challenges Brought to Light by Caregiving in the U.S. 2020 and COVID-19**

*Caregiving in the U.S.* was fielded in 2019, before the current COVID-19 pandemic. While some of the data reported in the study may have changed, the crisis has likely heightened some of the challenges that caregivers face in their journeys, which include experiences such as feeling alone, financial, and emotional strain, and balancing work while providing care.

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted low-income, diverse, and older populations-- particularly those in long-term care facilities. In doing so, COVID-19 has amplified structural weaknesses in our long-term care and public health systems, including inequities in access to health services, information, technology, resources, and workplace benefits. During this time, private and public sectors have become more cognizant of the need to address these systemic issues, and there is a collective will to do away with these inequities. The current climate affords room for us to strategically, collectively, and transparently address systematic shortcomings in meeting the needs of certain populations.

We also have a unique opportunity to leverage this catalytic time to better support and recognize caregivers by better integrating them as members of the healthcare team. Some progress toward this end is already happening. Nursing homes have begun, out of necessity, to introduce formal processes to update family members, leveraging technology, or other innovations. Changes in policies regarding telehealth have increased access to health services. But there is a larger opportunity for more transformation. This is the time to identify ways to reimburse providers for training caregivers, to integrate caregiver assessments in various healthcare touch points, and to address the digital divide. The possibilities are endless.

We hope that the findings from *Caregiving in the U.S.* and its accompanying special reports will inform policies and programs toward a system that can more effectively support caregivers and care recipients of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels. The current environment and the challenges that have come to light make it an appropriate time to move the needle from addressing and reducing inequities to working to eliminate them.