

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

March 31, 2025



This blog was originally focused on Women's History Month but I want to first acknowledge a recent announcement from the Trump Administration about the reorganization of the Department of Health and Human Services. The National Alliance for Caregiving is deeply concerned about this restructuring plan, particularly its impact on the Administration for Community Living. Read our statement [here](#).

As I told [Mother Jones](#), this threatens support for America's 53 million family caregivers who provide \$600 billion in unpaid care annually. As we consider how the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers will be implemented under this new structure, our focus on women's essential role in the care economy becomes even more urgent.

The Invisible Force: How Women Power America's Care Economy

My mom introduced me to caregiving before I even understood what it meant. Growing up in South Texas, I watched her juggle a full-time job while raising three kids and taking care of my grandmother as she battled multiple chronic conditions. It was tough work that she did out of a deep sense of love for her family. She also did it out of necessity, as there were no alternatives — and she had little support to make it easier. It was my mom's story, and her sacrifices, that I'm reflecting on during Women's History Month.

This isn't just my family's experience. When we talk about the backbone of our economy, we often think of factories and high-speed internet. But there's another critical economic engine that remains largely unseen: caregiving. And women are at the heart of it.

The \$300 Billion Contribution You Never Hear About

Let's put this in perspective: women make up [61% of family caregivers](#) in America and contribute more than \$300 billion of the [\\$600 billion](#) total in unpaid caregiving labor annually. That's more than the entire GDP of nearly 130 countries around the world.

The unpaid work that women do caring for aging parents, children with disabilities, and other family members creates economic value comparable to entire nations. Yet this massive contribution remains largely invisible in how we talk about our economy.

The Real Cost of Caring: What Women Sacrifice

For many women, becoming a caregiver isn't just about the hours spent providing care—it's about the profound impact on their financial future.

I saw this firsthand with my mom. Despite her talent with numbers and dream of becoming a certified public accountant, she was never able to finish her college degree. Instead, she worked as a bookkeeper, forgoing her professional aspirations to provide care for others. Her story of sacrificed potential is far from unique.

Our [Caregiving in the U.S. 2020](#) report revealed that women caregivers are more likely to be hourly workers (58% compared to 49% of male caregivers) and typically provide care for longer periods, often caring for multiple people. The financial impact is staggering. A study we conducted found that women caregivers of people over 50 lost approximately \$324,044 in wages and Social Security benefits due to caregiving responsibilities. Men weren't immune either, losing an average of \$283,716, but the disparity is clear.

When a woman steps back from her career to provide care, she's not just losing today's paycheck—she's compromising her retirement security and long-term financial independence.

Sharing Care: Men in Caregiving

While women still shoulder most caregiving responsibilities, there's a promising trend of more men stepping into these roles. However, they face their own challenges -- [one in five](#) report feeling untrusted with caregiving tasks, despite often being primary earners in their households.

When I [spoke with USA Today](#) about this issue recently, I emphasized that supporting male caregivers is crucial for alleviating pressure on women. Just as we've seen with parenting, removing gender barriers around caregiving can help families distribute responsibilities more equitably among siblings, partners, and extended family.

Real Solutions for Real People

So what can we actually do about this? Here are some approaches that could make a meaningful difference:

- **Workplace Protections That Reflect Reality:** We need paid leave policies that recognize caregiving as a legitimate reason for time away from work, allowing caregivers to maintain their financial stability while fulfilling family obligations.
- **Economic Recognition of Care Work:** Whether through tax credits or direct stipends we need to acknowledge caregiving as valuable work. It's telling that [65% of caregivers](#) believe being paid for even some of their caregiving hours would significantly improve their ability to provide care.
- **Leveraging Existing Systems:** Medicaid has untapped potential to support family caregivers. The [structured family caregiving benefit](#) under Medicaid could be expanded to provide immediate relief to families in need.

There are promising policy ideas already in circulation. The bipartisan [Credit for Caring Act](#) would provide tax credits to offset caregiving costs. [The Social Security Caregiver Credit Act](#) would recognize caregivers of dependent relatives as having earned wages for up to five years—acknowledging their work in our retirement system. Just this month, Representatives Suozzi (D-NY) and Moolenaar (R-MI) introduced the [Well-Being Insurance for Seniors to be at Home \(WISH\) Act](#), which would create a federal catastrophic long-term care insurance program.

Moving Forward Together

When we undervalue care work, we perpetuate gender inequality and limit economic progress for everyone. By reforming our approach to caregiving, we can strengthen individual security, boost workforce participation, and build more resilient communities.

During Women's History Month, it's fitting to recognize the enormous contribution women make through caregiving labor. But recognition isn't enough—we need action. At NAC, we remain committed to advocating for policies that recognize caregiving as an investment in our shared future.

Because caring for each other isn't just the right thing to do—it's essential to our economy and our society.



National Alliance for Caregiving | 1730 Rhode Island Ave. NW Suite 812 | Washington, DC
20036 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!