

June 8, 2020

The Honorable Linda Sanchez
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative Sanchez:

As a nationwide, not-for-profit society of geriatrics healthcare professionals, the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of older people. Our clinician members remain on the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19 with some of our most vulnerable older Americans and their families.

We greatly appreciate your work to help address the impacts of COVID-19, including your support for the HEROES Act and the CARES Act; co-sponsorship for H.R. 6709, the Coronavirus Frontline Workers Fair Pay Act; and introduction of H.R. 6787, Providing Essentials for Frontline Workers Act. We continue to see the toll of COVID-19 on older adults, especially those who live alone or are cognitively impaired, with increased risk of detrimental effects from social isolation.¹ A crucial group significantly impacted are family caregivers whose caregiving duties have amplified as adult day centers and senior centers remain temporarily closed. Family caregivers are unrecognized in current legislation, left out of the previous COVID-19 relief packages, and are all too often underappreciated for their role in caring for older loved ones. We urge you to consider introducing legislation to expand the Tax Credit for Other Dependents so that it includes older individuals. This change would support all of us as we age.

Family caregivers are typically not paid for the care they provide, but spend an average of \$7,000 in caregiving expenses² while supporting their family member(s) at least 24 hours a week with completing the activities of daily living, assisting with medical/nursing tasks, and coordinating care.³ Some 39 percent of working women reported taking long leaves of absence due to family caregiving. The high cost and limited availability of family care, coupled with a lack of programs and policies to support women to care for family members during their prime career and childbearing years, affects the decisions that women—who still provide the majority of care in the United States—make about where and how long they work. For example, research using data from the Health and Retirement Study from the University of Michigan found that women faced with caregiving in midlife were 8% less likely to work, and that after providing care, were 4% less likely to continue working. Other related challenges include being passed over for major assignments, not having access to senior mentors, not being

¹ American Geriatrics Society. AGS Position Statement: Resource Allocation Strategies and Age-Related Considerations in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2020.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/jgs.16537>

² Rainville, C., Skufca, L., and Mehegen, L. (2016). Family Caregiving and Out-of-Pocket: 2016 Report. https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/ltc/2016/family-caregiving-costs-fact-sheet.doi.10.26419%252Fres.00138.002.pdf

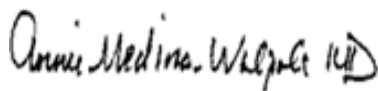
³ AARP Family Caregiving (2020). Caregiving in the U.S. 2020 Report <https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Executive-Summary-Caregiving-in-the-United-States-2020.pdf>

promoted in a timely fashion, and lagging behind men in terms of compensation and leadership representation.⁴

The current Tax Credit for Other Dependents does not consider the high costs of family caregiving. The paid leave mandate in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act is restricted to caring for those with known COVID-19 and does not address the needs of family caregivers across the U.S. who provide the majority of care for their older loved ones. During the current public health emergency, financial support for the family caregivers is imperative as they care for the many older Americans who are at the greatest at risk for complications and death due to COVID-19.⁵

Thank you for all you are doing to support frontline workers, patients, and their families during this challenging time. We stand ready to support you and provide guidance as the COVID-19 public health emergency continues to evolve. For additional information or if you have questions, please contact Anna Kim by emailing akim@americangeriatrics.org.

Sincerely,



Annette Medina-Walpole, MD
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg
Chief Executive Officer

⁴ Graf N, Brown A, Patten E. (2019). The Narrowing, But Persistent, Gender Gap in Pay. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/03/22/gender-pay-gap-facts/>

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness. April 2, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>.