October 30, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC  20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

AARP, on behalf of our 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, would like to thank you for marking up multiple bills important to consumers and their family caregivers. We are supportive of the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act (S. 995) and the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act (S. 1399), and applaud the committee for working to advance these bills towards passage.

**S. 995 – the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act**

AARP has endorsed the bipartisan Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act that would help support family caregivers caring for loved ones of all ages and supports the Chairman’s mark of this bill.

Family caregivers help make it possible for older adults, veterans, and people with disabilities of all ages to live independently in their homes and communities. About 40 million family caregivers provide about $470 billion in unpaid care annually. While many family caregivers find caregiving to be an enriching experience and a source of deep satisfaction, family caregivers also take on physical, emotional, and financial challenges in their caregiving roles. About 30 percent of family caregivers provide, on average, 62 hours of care weekly and some family caregivers provide care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Respite care provides family caregivers with vital temporary relief from their caregiving responsibilities and is one of the most commonly requested caregiver support services. Respite care can allow a family caregiver much needed time to go see their own doctor, run errands, go to work, and take care of themselves (ultimately helping them to better assist their loved one). The Lifespan Respite Care Program helps family caregivers caring for loved ones regardless of
age or disability, including by providing respite services, training respite workers and volunteers, providing information about and assistance in accessing services, and better coordinating services. Respite can extend the time an individual is cared for at home, potentially delaying costly institutional care and saving taxpayer dollars. The **Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act** would reauthorize the Lifespan Respite Care Program through Fiscal Year 2024, authorize increased funding for the program above current appropriated levels, and add new reporting requirements.

**S. 1399 – the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act**

The Nursing Workforce Development programs address all aspects of nursing workforce demand, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention. The programs and activities authorized are responsible for the training of approximately 25,000 students to be nurses, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists and nursing faculty and researchers. They also support interdisciplinary training and efforts to diversify the nursing workforce. Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs help expand access to health care by connecting patients with care across a variety of settings, including in community health centers, hospitals, universities, long-term care facilities, local and state health departments, schools, workplaces, and patients’ homes. AARP believes reauthorization is important for training more highly skills nurses and diversifying the nursing workforce to appropriately reflect the communities served.

Thank you again for your bipartisan efforts in support of these two pieces of legislation. We look forward to working with you toward final passage of these bills. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Rhonda Richards of our Government Affairs team at rrichards@aarp.org or 202-434-3791.

Sincerely,

David Certner  
Legislative Counsel and Legislative Policy Director  
Government Affairs