



December 18, 2017

The Honorable Gregg Harper
2227 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kathy Castor
2052 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Harper and Castor:

On behalf of the Patient Quality of Life Coalition, we wish to express our support for H.R. 3759, the *Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act*. This bipartisan legislation, which has already passed the Senate, will make a difference in the lives of millions of patients living with serious or life-threatening illness and their caregivers.

The Patient Quality of Life Coalition brings together organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of patients and families facing serious illness, with the overarching goal of expanding access to high-quality palliative care services. Our Coalition members represent patients, health professionals, and healthcare systems, and they well understand and appreciate the key role family caregivers play in the lives of seriously ill adults and children.

Nearly 44 million family caregivers provide approximately \$470 billion annually in unpaid care to those in need. They take on challenges that impact their health, emotional well-being, and financial security while making it possible for older adults and people with disabilities to live independently in their homes and communities. The National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP study, *Caregiving in the U.S.*¹, found that 22 percent of caregivers felt their health – both physical and emotional – had gotten worse as a result of caregiving. These difficulties are further compounded by a lack of formal recognition from the health care system.

All too often, family caregivers are not included in appropriate health and social service programs. A national strategy is necessary to effectively identify the needs of all family caregivers, include them in appropriate care models, and provide them with essential supports. By requiring the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop such a strategy, and establishing an advisory body composed of private and public sector representatives to guide its development, the *RAISE Family Caregivers Act* would implement a key recommendation of the bipartisan federal Commission on Long-Term Care. This is consistent with a recommendation made last year by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine calling for a family caregiver strategy.

Our country relies on the contributions of family caregivers to help people with serious illness, multiple chronic conditions, or other disabilities to remain living at home and to

¹AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving. (2015). *Caregiving in the U.S.* Retrieved from: http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015_CaregivingintheUS_Final-Report-June-4_WEB.pdf.

delay or prevent more costly care and unnecessary hospitalizations. We appreciate your recognizing that more must be done to sustain caregivers in these vital efforts and applaud your bipartisan leadership in advancing this important issue. The Patient Quality of Life Coalition is committed to working with you to enact the *RAISE Family Caregivers Act*.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Keysha Brooks-Coley with the Patient Quality of Life Coalition at keysha.brooks-coley@cancer.org.

Sincerely,

Academy of Integrative Pain Management
Alzheimer's Association
Alzheimer's Impact Movement
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
Association of Oncology Social Work
Cambia Health Solutions
Catholic Health Association of the US
Center to Advance Palliative Care
Coalition for Compassionate Care of California
Lung Cancer Alliance
Motion Picture & Television Fund
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care
National Palliative Care Research Center
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Oncology Nursing Society
Pediatric Palliative Care Coalition
Physician Assistants in Hospice and Palliative Medicine
ResolutionCare
Supportive Care Coalition
Trinity Health

Cc:

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair, House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member, House Committee on Education and the Workforce
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515