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Lawmakers, Business Leaders, and Advocates Discuss Family Caregiving in U.S. Today

National Forum on Family Caregiving participants address strategies and policies to help caregivers

WASHINGTON, DC—Members of Congress joined leaders from the employer, health care, venture funding, entrepreneurial, and consumer advocacy communities today for a discussion on the challenges facing—and potential solutions for—the 40 million Americans who provide care for their parents, spouses/partners, and other loved ones. The “Forum on Family Caregiving: Perspectives from Policymakers and Thought Leaders” was convened by AARP as part of its ongoing work to support family caregivers.

The forum was bookended by conversations with and remarks by federal lawmakers about promising developments on Capitol Hill. During and after a panel moderated by *Washington Post* personal finance columnist Michelle Singletary, the four co-chairs of the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Caucus—U.S. Senators **Kelly Ayotte (R-NH)** and **Michael Bennet (D-CO)** and U.S. Representatives **Diane Black (R-TN)** and **Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM)**—discussed family caregiving and the work of the ACT Caucus. Later, U.S. Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), along with U.S. Representative Kathy Castor (D-FL), spoke about their Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act, which would require the development and maintenance of an integrated national strategy to recognize and support family caregivers. U.S. Representative Gregg Harper (R-MS) is the lead sponsor of this bipartisan bill in the House.

“Just a few years ago, taking care of a loved one used to be just an experience that millions of people went through, silently, too often on their own,” said **AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins**. “Today, however, caregiving is increasingly recognized as an important issue that political leaders, employers, and others must address so that people can provide their loved ones with needed care while also meeting their own responsibilities on the job and at home.”

The caregiving forum looked beyond the beltway to discuss how both the public and private sectors are adapting to meet the needs of family caregivers and the loved ones they care for. Erika Ross, Senior Vice President, Health, Wellness and Life Management at Bank of America, spoke about her company’s robust benefits program for caregivers, which includes back-up care, professional care management, and elder law resources for employees. Sherwin Sheik, President and CEO of Carelinx, and John Hopper, Chief Investment Officer of Ziegler Link-Age Longevity Fund, highlighted the growth, trends, and opportunities in the market to provide care and support for family caregivers. Dr. Patricia A. O’Keefe, Interim President of Morristown Medical Center (Atlantic Health System), discussed the ways the health system is incorporating family caregivers into their care planning. Jen Mishory, Executive Director of the Young Invincibles, addressed family caregiving from the Millennial perspective, while Marty Ford, Senior Executive Officer, Public Policy for The Arc, discussed various programs to support people who are caring for loved ones with disabilities.

“If you’re not a family caregiver now, you likely will be or will need one someday,” said **Nancy LeaMond, AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer**. “This is an issue that will impact everyone and requires solutions that involve everyone. The support that family caregivers need will not come exclusively from one particular sector or political party; it will involve all of us.”

Also today at the forum, AARP announced the launch of the next wave of its “**1 Heart Caregivers**” story-telling initiative, which recognizes the silent army of Americans who performs a great labor of love each and every day, caring for older parents, spouses and other loved ones so they can remain in their homes. To honor family caregivers from across the nation, AARP unveiled “Portraits of Care,” inviting caregivers to submit their personal stories for the opportunity to receive an artist’s painting of them and their loved one. One caregiver from each of the 53 U.S. states and territories will be randomly selected after September 30 to receive a Portrait of Care, which will be presented in November during National Family Caregivers Month.

For more information on caregiving, visit AARP’s Caregiving Resource Center at www.aarp.org/caregiving.

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Statements and quotes from participants at the “Forum on Family Caregiving: Perspectives from Policymakers and Thought Leaders”

Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH)

"Caregiving is an issue that transcends party lines, and the Assisting Caregivers Today caucus provides an opportunity for Republicans and Democrats to work together on exploring ways to better support caregivers and their loved ones. In 2009, 268,000 people in New Hampshire provided care to someone at one point during the year. On behalf of these Granite State caregivers, I am pleased to take part in this forum and look forward to working with AARP and my colleagues as we continue this important dialogue."

Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO)

"Every day, families in Colorado are splitting up responsibilities, organizing schedules, and pitching in to care for their loved ones. Family caregivers willingly take on these huge responsibilities, facing physical, emotional, and financial challenges along the way. We need to look at these issues in a comprehensive way to relieve some of the stresses these caregivers take on out of pure love and sacrifice for their family."

Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

"Family caregivers are integral to our long-term care system and our economy, but are too often overlooked as part of the care team for seniors and those with disabilities. If we are serious about ensuring that our older adults and loved ones with disabilities receive the highest quality care in their own homes, we must formally recognize and support family caregivers. This is why I am proud to introduce the bipartisan RAISE Family Caregivers Act to create a national strategy and plan to assist family caregivers. This effort is especially personal to me as I was raised by my maternal grandparents and later served as my grandmother's primary caretaker as she grew older, and I will continue to work to ensure that everyone has access to the care and assistance they need and deserve."

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)

"The American population is aging and the need for care and support is increasing. Family caregivers are an invaluable resource to our aging society. Chances are that, sooner or later, we will all either be family caregivers or someone who needs one. I commend AARP for bringing leaders from across the country together for a conversation about what individuals, businesses and governments can do to support the more than 40 million family caregivers in the United States."

Representative Diane Black (R-TN)

"Having just celebrated my father's 90th birthday and as a nurse for more than 40 years, caregiving is something that I have dealt with both personally and professionally. Regardless of our age or background, caring for our loved ones is a responsibility that most Americans will take on at some point in our lives. I am honored to be a founding member and co-chair of the bipartisan Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Caucus and look forward to working with my colleagues to find solutions that will reduce costs while ensuring that we never compromise the quality of long term care."

Representative Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM)

"The status quo in caregiving is no longer acceptable. Seniors and individuals with disabilities deserve more than the fragmented system that currently exists, and the demands placed on that system will only continue to grow. Congress must come together to address these concerns and ensure the health and independence of millions of Americans."

Representative Kathy Castor (D-FL)

"With almost 3 million caregivers in my home state of Florida and millions more across the country, there is a need to come together as a country to better understand the needs of caregivers. I am proud to introduce the RAISE Family Caregivers Act in the U.S. House of Representatives to create and maintain a much-needed National Family Caregiving Strategy with recommendations by experts related to support services, training, workplace policies and others to better support caregivers. I look forward to working closely with AARP on this legislation as we have done in the past to improve the lives of our seniors and their families."

Erika Marlise Ross, Benefits Executive, Senior Vice President Health, Wellness, and Life Management, Bank of America

"If you're caring for children and adults, you shouldn't have to choose."

Marty Ford, Senior Executive Officer, Public Policy, The Arc

"This is a crisis that people are living with every day."

John Hopper, Chief Investment Officer, Ziegler Link•Age Longevity Fund

"There are companies using technology in innovative ways to close that [family caregiver] gap."

Jen Mishory, Executive Director, Young Invincibles

"I think the numbers might surprise you. About one-quarter of all caregivers are Millennials."

Sherwin Sheik, President and CEO, CareLinx

“Families are having a hard time finding the right caregivers for their specific needs...making the right match is imperative.”

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.

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