

Issue Brief – Caregiving

Background

There are millions of American caregivers and approximately 578,000 Wisconsinites who act as unpaid family caregivers in their daily lives. The value of that uncompensated care is \$7 billion. Now more than ever, family caregivers find themselves performing medical or nursing tasks for those in their care.

Family caregivers help people stay in their own homes and help keep people from relying on government programs. In doing so, they spend close to \$7,000 per year out of their own budget to supplement the care needs of their family member. If the caregiving is long distance, the out of pocket spent is closer to \$12,000.

Policy Solutions

AARP supports a caregiver tax credit, which will allow freedom and flexibility for caregivers. It provides caregivers with a \$500 tax credit to reimburse them for expenses incurred related to caregiving. This helps keep individuals in need of care at home and financially independent. The state will save money on long term care by investing in caregivers and keeping older Wisconsinites at home instead of relying on state-funded programs.

AARP also supports requiring hospitals to educate and train designated caregivers. This helps family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital, by requiring hospitals to record the caregiver's name in the patient's medical record, by notifying the caregiver before the patient is discharged, and by instructing the caregiver on any medical tasks they will need to perform once their loved one returns home. In prior sessions it was called the CARE Act.

Furthermore, AARP supports a statewide expansion of the Dementia Care Specialist Program to all ADRC's in Wisconsin. We also support an expansion of the Wisconsin Family Medical Leave Act.

Key Messages

A state income tax credit for family caregivers who incur expenses for care and support of a family member will lead to savings for the state. A recent AARP study on family caregiving costs found:

- On average, family caregivers spend about \$7,000 per year on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving.
- 25% of out-of-pocket caregiver spending is on medical expenses.
- 56% of employed caregivers reported experiencing at least one work-related strain due to caregiving, resulting in the need to take time off or work fewer hours.

BY THE NUMBERS:

578,000

Wisconsinites act as unpaid caregivers

\$7 Billion

The value of the uncompensated care Wisconsinites do

\$7,000

The average amount family caregivers spend per year on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving

46%

Of family caregivers perform medical or nursing tasks—most have little or no training

1 in 4

Workers over the age of 25 are family caregivers

- Three in ten caregivers have dipped into their personal savings to pay for care.

Educating and Training Caregivers helps Wisconsinites:

- The vast majority (87%) of older Americans say they want to stay in their current homes and communities as they age. Family caregivers provide the majority of care that helps older Americans remain at home as they age.
- Most care recipients (69%) did not have a home visit by a health care professional after discharge from the hospital.
- Three out of four family caregivers who provided help with multiple medical/nursing tasks believed they were helping their family member avoid going into an institution.
- This provision helps family caregivers by requiring hospitals to record the caregiver's name in the patient's medical record when they are admitted to the hospital. In addition, they must instruct the caregiver on any medical tasks they will need to perform once their loved one returns home.
- A 2019 survey of Wisconsin revealed that 34% of current and former caregivers whose loved ones were admitted to the hospital did not receive instructions or demonstrations of medical or nursing tasks.
- Almost half (46%) of family caregivers perform medical or nursing tasks – like complex medication management, wound care, and injections – for their loved ones. Most report that they received little or no training to perform these tasks.
- Three out of four family caregivers who provided help with multiple medical/nursing tasks believed they are helping their family member avoid going into an institution.
- The survey showed this legislation when proposed in the past had very broad bipartisan voter support. 81% support requiring the hospital to record caregiver information on admission, 91% support requiring the hospital to inform the caregiver about major decisions and 94% support the requirement for hospitals to explain and demonstrate medical and nursing tasks.

Expanding the Wisconsin Family Medical Leave Act is very important to working caregivers:

- One in four workers over the age of 25+ are family care givers.
- Care coordination meetings, discharge planning and medical appointments often take place during regular working hours and the current WMFLA covers only acute medical conditions. This make the benefit available to caregivers caring for someone with a chronic condition.
- Grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings would also be able to use the benefit.

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