



## **TESTIMONY**

In Support Of

### **LD 1624, Resolve, To Create a Stakeholder Group To Identify the Needs of Long-term Care Family Caregivers**

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Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

**May 3, 2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and committee members, my name is Brenda Gallant. I am the Long-Term Care Ombudsman. The Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a statewide non-profit organization that provides advocacy for older adults and adults with disabilities who receive long-term services and supports in all settings. We serve residents in nursing homes, assisted housing including residential care and assisted living facilities, adult day programs and recipients of home care services. Additionally, we serve patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing long-term services and supports.

We are pleased to provide testimony in support of this resolve that requires the long-term care ombudsman program to establish a stakeholder group to consider and make recommendations for the implementation of an assessment measure for the needs of family caregivers providing long-term services and supports to family members, to establish a plan to improve referrals to services and to submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services no later than January 2, 2022. Though AARP Maine is not named as a convener, they have committed to working with us on this important project.

Family caregivers are the backbone of the long-term services and supports system. In Maine alone, they provide 2.2 billion annually in unpaid caregiving. (AARP, Valuing the Invaluable 2017) In spite of their critical role, they are often overlooked and find themselves overwhelmed and isolated. Sometimes their caregiving involves tasks that typically a nurse would perform. They often carry out these tasks with little training.

I serve on the national RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council. As a result, I learned about the TCARE assessment that Washington State implemented to identify the needs of family caregivers. This assessment is used to identify the key predictors of caregiver burnout. This is the only Evidence-Based, CMS 1115-approved and ACL-accredited solution to prevent family

caregiver burnout. There are three assessments: one for older adults, another for veterans and a third assessment for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.

In Washington State, the implementation of TCARE resulted in improved levels of depression and stress in 84% of caregivers, delayed nursing home placement by 21 months and saved the state's Medicaid budget 20 million annually. Since 2009, TCARE protocol has been the legislatively mandated caregiver screening and assessment tool in Washington State. Recognizing the success of TCARE, at least 30 states are using TCARE to assess family caregivers.

We have reached out to Washington State. Staff there are interested in supporting a workgroup here in Maine. They suggested that that we reach out to Idaho and New York State. We have done that. Both these states are implementing pilot projects. We have discussed having quarterly contact with states utilizing TCARE to share ideas.

We are very pleased to be partnering with AARP Maine to bring together a stakeholder group to consider the implementation of TCARE. As you know, AARP has conducted research and published reports regarding family caregiving. We believe that the expertise of stakeholders and the input of family caregivers will foster the planning process required in this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.