



Family Caregiver Support Legislation House Bill 293 (Willis) and Senate Bill 1766 (Belt)

Seventeen years ago, in 2004, Illinois passed the Family Caregiver Act. While the Act was passed with bipartisan support, it has never been funded at the state level.

The Act states: “It is the intent of the General Assembly to establish a multi-faceted family caregiver support program **to assist unpaid family caregivers and grandparents** or other older individuals who are relative caregivers, who are informal providers of in-home and community care to **older individuals or children.**” 320 ILCS 65.

The goal of the Family Caregiver Act is to provide support to unpaid family caregivers, so they can continue in their caregiver role, allowing their loved one to remain at home and not in a costly institutional setting.

An AARP Illinois Caregiving Survey recently found that:

- In Illinois, there are over **1.5 million** caregivers providing **1.4 billion** hours of unpaid work annually.
- The care provided by family caregivers in Illinois is estimated to be **worth \$ 18.5 billion.**
- **Two-thirds** of persons living at home needing assistance with personal care needs depend solely on family and friends for assistance. Only about 5% rely exclusively on paid providers.

Many family caregivers report substantial **physical, psychological, and financial stress.** Without relief, this stress may lead to premature or unnecessary institutionalization of their loved one as the caregiver can no longer provide adequate care due to a deterioration in the health, family or financial circumstances of the caregiver. The responsibility of caring for an aging loved one is not easy, and **70% of caregivers report feeling stress.**

Various support services are available to provide stress relief, including respite care and training. Services suited to individual caregivers can be identified utilizing an **evidence-based assessment tool** that measures caregiver stress. This tool targets services and designs interventions specifically to address stress points. Services are then provided to those caregivers with moderate to high level stress.

- For example, in one situation a woman was being cared for by her daughter and son-in-law. The situation caused such great stress that the couple considered placing her in a nursing home. The tailored assessment tool revealed this stress point and proposed counseling services to assist the couple while continuing to care for their loved one.

Funding the Illinois Family Caregiver Act to provide relief to family caregivers through an evidence-based assessment tool and its targeted interventions **will save Medicaid dollars.** A similar program in Washington state has shown a **\$20 million savings in Medicaid** spending by **delaying nursing home placement by 21 months or more** through supportive services to family caregivers.

This tool and the targeted services would be implemented through the existing network of Area Agencies on Aging who **are already** administering federal Family Caregiver dollars.

This request for **\$6 million in state funding** for the Illinois Family Caregiver Act will strengthen the aging network’s ability to support family caregivers using new resources and protocols, and allow Illinois’ seniors to remain in their homes and be cared for by the ones who know and love them, their own family.