

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States House of Representatives
214 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

July 8, 2015

Dear Representative Lujan Grisham,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to thank you for introducing, and to offer support for, the National Care Corps Act (H.R. 2668). This timely policy proposes to establish a dedicated program within the Department of Health and Human Services to provide training for volunteers 18 and older, who would then be equipped to assist older adults in a variety of ways (not including medical care or personal care) as volunteers working for a local Care Corps program. It is an innovative and important solution to the challenges presented by a fragmented medical and long-term care system that now relies almost exclusively on family caregivers to meet virtually all needs outside of medical settings.

The need to create Care Corps programs in communities across the country has never been clearer. Even as the number of family caregivers is on track to decline sharply during the next several decades, the number of Americans over the age of 85 – of whom millions will require significant assistance due to chronic conditions and functional limitations – is on track to quadruple by 2050. At the same time, the economic realities confronting dual-income working families and the fact that adult children also frequently live far from their parents and other relatives, means that many older adults of the 21st century will have fewer immediate family members on whom they can rely.

The Care Corps Act is designed to harness the power and passion of neighbors, friends and people of all ages and from many walks of life who are looking for ways to give to their community. Care Corps volunteers would be well-prepared to assist elders who have chronic conditions and functional limitations, and who are vulnerable to social isolation. We share your belief that we must take steps to build out a much larger and more robust cadre of volunteers who can supplement the work of direct care aides and family caregivers by providing quality companionship and simple non-medical support. Corps members can also offer people in need of it an important way to maintain connections with the larger world.

In summary, H.R. 2668 takes an important step forward in trying to fill a growing “care gap,” and to ensure that the coming “age wave” of older Americans will be able to live

as comfortably and meaningfully and possible, according to their own wishes and goals. Thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to move this important bill through Congress.

Sincerely,

Altarum Institute, Center for Elder Care and Advanced Illness

Caregiver Action Network (CAN)

Easter Seals

International Association for Indigenous Aging (IA2)

National Alliance for Caregiving

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care