

September 23, 2015

Senator Mike Shirkey, Chairman, *and*
Members of the Senate Health Policy Committee
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing MI 48909

Re: **AARP Support for SB 352 (O'Brien)**

Dear Senator,

We are writing on behalf of AARP Michigan to express our strong support for **Senate Bill 352**, which would establish the Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable (CARE) Act in Michigan. The CARE Act is a commonsense solution to help support and better equip family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home.

In any given year, over 2 million Michigan residents will serve as family caregivers for an aging parent, spouse, aunt, uncle, friend or other adult loved one – helping them live independently at home, where they want to be. According to AARP research, Michigan's family caregivers provide nearly 1.4 billion hours of free care to loved ones which is valued at more than \$15.5 billion each year.

As chronicled in the October 2012 AARP Public Policy Institute report entitled *Home Alone: Family Caregivers Providing Complex Chronic Care*,¹ nearly half of family caregivers end up performing medical and nursing tasks in the home that once were in the domain of only doctors or nurses, often with little or no training.

The CARE Act would ensure that hospitals:

- *Record* the name of the family caregiver when a loved one is admitted into a hospital;
- *Notify* the family caregiver when the loved one is going to be discharged to another facility or back home; and
- *Provide* the family caregiver an explanation and live instruction of any medical tasks – such as medication management, injections, wound care and transfers – that the family caregiver will need to perform at home.

Family caregivers shoulder great responsibilities. They are the first line of defense against older Americans being readmitted into hospitals or forced to move into nursing homes. They clean wounds, handle feeding tubes, give injections, and manage complex medications – in addition to

cooking meals, handling finances, doing the chores, and providing personal care like bathing and dressing.

Michigan families have a proud history of taking care of themselves, and the CARE Act is one way to help better equip families to do so. As a 2015 study by the *Journal of Healthcare Quality* concluded, the incidence of adverse outcomes can be reduced significantly when hospitals adopt proactive, enhanced transition interventions to assure that family caregivers are well prepared when patients are discharged.ⁱⁱ And preventing unnecessary hospital readmissions reduces overall health care costs and saves money for taxpayers.

AARP Michigan urges you to support SB 352. If you have any questions or if there is further information we can provide, please feel free to contact Melissa Seifert at 517-267-8934 or mseifert@aarp.org. Thank you for your consideration and your work on this important issue.

Respectfully,



Paula D. Cunningham
State Director



Thomas E. Kimble
Volunteer State President



Lisa Dedden Cooper
Manager of Advocacy



Melissa Seifert
Associate State Director, Government Affairs

ⁱ *Home Alone: Family Caregivers Providing Complex Chronic Care* (AARP Public Policy Institute, Oct 2012). http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/health/home-alone-family-caregivers-providing-complex-chronic-care-rev-AARP-ppi-health.pdf

ⁱⁱ *Empowering Family Caregivers Assures Successful Acute Care Transitions* (*Journal for Healthcare Quality*, Jan 2015). <http://www.newswise.com/articles/empowering-family-caregivers-assures-successful-acute-care-transitions>

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501(c)(4) social welfare organization that advocates on issues that matter the most to people age 50 and over, and their families. AARP has approximately 1.4 million members in Michigan. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates.

Mary Clark tells her caregiving story

Dr. Mary Clark became an advocate for the CARE Act the hard way.

Her mother suffered from dementia and other health problems requiring around-the-clock care. Clark and her two sisters organized a 12-person caregiving team to ensure her mom had the help she needed to remain comfortable at home.

But even Clark – a highly educated, motivated health care professional – faced tough challenges, decisions and issues as a caregiver. She shudders to think about the monumental struggles that could overwhelm caregivers who don't have the resources and the knowledge about the health care industry that she has.

"It makes me sad to think about it," said Clark, who is the assistant dean in the Wayne State University Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. "The CARE Act will help those who don't know what to ask."

The CARE Act, now in the Michigan Legislature, is a common-sense solution to helping caregivers get the information and training they need when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home.

Senate Bill 352 includes three important provisions:

- The name of the family caregiver is recorded when a loved one is admitted into a hospital;
- The family caregiver is notified if the loved one is to be discharged to another facility or back home; and,
- The facility must provide an explanation and live instruction of the medical tasks – such as medication management, injections, wound care, and transfers – that the family caregiver will perform at home.

That last provision would have been especially beneficial to Clark's family. They did not receive complete information about medication that was prescribed after her mom left the hospital and the result was permanent kidney



Dr. Mary Clark

damage. The family faced a tough call between dialysis and hospice and ultimately decided their 82-year-old matriarch couldn't handle the kidney treatment. She died in January.

"We're not blaming anyone, but the medication should have been monitored because it was short-term. We did receive a list of things to go over with the nurses, but there were some missing pieces," Clark said.

The caregiving experience "did have some good parts," Clark added. Her mom had more than three additional years in the familiar surroundings of her home, where she loved to sit in her breakfast nook.

"She was able to be in that breakfast nook until three days before she died. That made her comfortable and happy. Even though she had dementia, she knew she was home," Clark said.

The CARE Act is in the Senate Health Policy Committee.

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See and hear what Michiganders are saying about family caregiving and the CARE Act

Watch AARP Michigan's video at
<https://youtu.be/EdaAivH7oPU>



Christina Guzman of Detroit

"I live next door to my mom and dad... my working situation, I started up my own consulting business so I could better take care of them."

"There's so much to caregiving, there's a lot of stress."

"If the Michigan Legislature would pass the (CARE Act) I think it would be beneficial for both the person being taken care of and the caregiver, it would give them more knowledge."

Diane Bright of Troy

"I think the best thing that happens with caregiving is you actually spend so much time with the person you're taking care of that you have the opportunity to relive some of the moments you had living in each other's lives in earlier times."

"The hardest element is juggling the time and finding time for your life."

"The CARE Act could really help in enhancing the ease of care for the caregiver and the person receiving care because it brings continuity to all the caregiving that's happening, whether it be in the hospital, in the home or in the community."

Andrea Collier of Lansing

"She (her mother) was my full-time priority... whatever that entailed. It was 24-7."

"You don't think about it at the time, you do what you do, you put one foot in front of the other... and some kind of way you get through it."

"If you're a caregiver, you really need to be the person's advocate and having that information (called for in the CARE Act) is great and it's important... we hear these horror stories all the time that people got moved and nobody got notified."



Visit aarp.org/iheartcaregivers to read more stories from family caregivers.