



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Advocates for Older Pennsylvanians Ask State Lawmakers to Pass Long-Overdue Help for Family Caregivers This Fall**

**HARRISBURG, PA**—A statewide coalition of advocates representing older Pennsylvanians today called on members of the General Assembly to approve much-needed changes to the state’s Family Caregiver Support Program that would help more families care for older adults at home.

At a state capitol news conference, Pennsylvania’s Senior Support Coalition asked lawmakers to pass the Family Caregiver Support Act ([HB 210/SB 639](#)) this fall to make Pennsylvania’s existing Family Caregiver Support Program consistent with federal guidelines and expand eligibility. Also attending the news conference were State Senator Kim Ward, Chair of the Senate Aging and Youth Committee and prime sponsor of SB 639, and State Rep. Matt Baker, Chair of the House Health Committee and prime sponsor of HB 210.

Pennsylvania’s Lottery-funded Family Caregiver Support Program was considered a national model when it was developed in 1990 and reimburses eligible families for out of pocket expenses related to caring for an older adult at home. The program is administered by local Area Agencies on Aging and has not been updated since its creation.

“Approval of the Family Caregiver Support Act does not require additional state spending,” said Vicki Hoak, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Homecare Association. “This legislation simply provides local Area Agencies on Aging the flexibility needed to effectively target existing funding so more seniors can remain in their homes.”

Hoak added that the program’s current restrictive eligibility requirements led to more than \$1 million of Lottery funds allocated to the state Family Caregiver Support Program going unspent in FY 2009-2010.

Unspent revenues for the state Family Caregiver Support Program is particularly disappointing when you consider that there are more than 1.3 million Pennsylvanians caring for elderly parents or other family members, said Bob Marino, Chairman of the Alzheimer’s Association Pennsylvania Public Policy Coalition.

“Research has shown these families are under a great deal of stress and need support,” he said.

“With just a little help, families can avoid being forced into Medicaid-funded nursing home care--with taxpayers picking up the tab.”

“The Family Caregiver Support Program is a perfect example of people taking personal responsibility,” Marino added. “We need to remove the barriers so we can honor that choice and support families who want to care for their aging loved ones at home.”

Earlier in the day, Senior Support Coalition members marked the beginning of the fall legislative session by delivering special *There’s No Place Like Home* welcome mats to the office of each member of the General Assembly.

Improvements to the Family Caregiver Support Program would deliver a significant boost to Pennsylvania’s system of long-term services and supports for older adults, which was ranked 39<sup>th</sup> nationally in a recent study. *Raising Expectations: A State Scorecard on Long-Term Services and Supports for Older Adults, People with Physical Disabilities, and Family Caregivers*, was released earlier this month by AARP, the Commonwealth Fund and the Scan Foundation, and is available at [www.longtermscorecard.org](http://www.longtermscorecard.org).

“This new study shows Pennsylvania’s long-term care programs still have a ways to go to help older adults exercise choice and control over their lives,” said Ray Landis, Advocacy Manager for AARP Pennsylvania. “Here in Pennsylvania, older adults have made their preferences very clear--they believe *There’s No Place Like Home* for receiving basic services that can mean the difference between aging in place and being forced into a nursing home.”

Pennsylvania’s Senior Support Coalition includes: Alzheimer’s Association, AARP Pennsylvania, Center for Advocacy for the Rights & Interests of the Elderly (CARIE), PA Homecare Association (PHA), PA Adult Day Services Association (PADSA), PA Association of Area Agencies on Aging (P4A), PA Association of Senior Centers (PASC) and PA LIFE Provider Alliance.

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