

## **Support Increased Public Investment in Home- and Community-Based Long-Term Care**

We support President Biden’s overall [plan](#) to improve the care infrastructure of the United States, including his specific proposal to invest \$450 billion in expansion and improvement of home and community-based services for the long-term care of those experiencing disability or the frailty of advanced age.

A large body of evidence-based research indicates that this investment will help:

**\*Increase access to home and community-based services.**<sup>1</sup> Current Medicaid funding for such services falls far short of serving all eligible families, with elderly women representing a disproportionate share of those in need of assistance. While institutional care is also important, funding shortfalls sometimes lead to unnecessary placements in nursing homes that pose serious risks of exposure to Covid-19 and other infectious diseases.

**\*Improve the quality of care provided.**<sup>2</sup> Low wages, stressful working conditions, stunted career ladders, and resulting high rates of turnover in the long-term care workforce limit workers’ ability to provide sensitive care, to collaborate effectively with unpaid family caregivers, and to take full advantage of new medical technologies. Higher pay for long-term care workers has been shown to improve patients’ health outcomes and life expectancy.

**\*Reduce financial and time pressures on unpaid family caregivers.**<sup>3</sup> A \$5,000 tax credit for family caregivers and credits toward Social Security will validate the value of unpaid care services. Greater access to high-quality paid assistance will improve collaboration and facilitate respites from family caregiving responsibilities

**\*Help create better jobs and career opportunities for home and community-based care workers.**<sup>4</sup> The current long-term care labor force is comprised largely of immigrants and women of color. This group, many of whom are eligible for public assistance, includes some of the most underpaid and undervalued workers in the U.S. Increasing their financial security can have positive multiplier effects on family and community well-being.

**\*Enhance the overall efficiency of our long-term care system.**<sup>5</sup> In recent years, most states have reallocated Medicaid funds from nursing homes to home and community-based care, because most people strongly prefer the latter. Cost savings depend largely on take-up rates and the quality of care provided. The Biden proposal includes funds for research on innovations that could pay off in improved health and reduced hospitalization rates.

**\*Foster a dynamic, resilient economy by helping families balance care needs and paid employment.**<sup>6</sup> Unexpected care shocks often create significant downside economic risks for families caught between a rock and a hard place—trying to find time to provide direct care but also earn enough money to pay their bills. Increased employment can contribute to sustainable economic growth. According to one recent estimate, a \$77.5

billion public investment in care services would yield 2 million new jobs and \$220 billion in new economic activity.

Sooner or later, most of us will need help from others. As social scientists and health care researchers we urge Congress to increase investment in the care workforce and home and community-based care by supporting President Biden's Build Back Better plan.

Sincerely,

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