



Legislative Endorsement

Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

S. 775/H. 1232, An Act relative to family members serving as caregiver

Sponsors: Senator Joan Lovely/Representative James O'Day

May 16, 2023

Honorable Cindy Friedman
Senate Chair
Cynthia.Friedman@masenate.gov

Honorable John Lawn
House Chair
john.lawn@mahouse.gov

Dear Chair Friedman and Chair Lawn:

Dignity Alliance Massachusetts is pleased to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill No. 775 and House Bill No. 1232, An Act relative to family members serving as caregivers. **Dignity Alliance also supports S.808, An act relative to spouses as caregivers filed by Sen. Bruce Tarr.**

Massachusetts has appropriate hundreds of millions of dollars, especially in recent years, to support paid caregivers in nursing homes and home care in an attempt to improve conditions and pay for these overworked, underpaid nurses and certified nurse assistants. As a Commonwealth, we could not meet the care needs of older adults and people with disabilities, however, without the unpaid service of so many family members and friends.¹

As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) points out, “Millions of older adults and people with disabilities could not maintain their independence without the help of unpaid caregivers. This care would cost nearly \$470 billion a year if purchased. That’s one of the reasons that caregiving is an essential public health service and should be prioritized as an emerging public health issue.”²

¹ [Caregiver Health - Family Caregiver Alliance](#)

² [Supporting Caregivers | CDC](#)

Caregivers are family members or friends who typically provide unpaid, long-term, community-based care and assistance to older adults and people with chronic health conditions or disabilities. Caregivers help with a variety of routine tasks such as shopping, paying bills, bathing, dressing, and managing medicines. They are often a source of emotional support and companionship for care recipients. 79% of caregivers care for adults aged 50 or older, and 76% of care recipients are aged 65 years and older.³

However, the number of caregivers could be expanded, and some current caregivers could get relief from the financial and emotional burdens of caregiving over time, if they could receive some assistance and resources through MassHealth and the federal government. We already know that there is a current, serious shortage of caregivers. Studies have found that, “in 2030 there will be a national shortage of 151,000 paid direct care workers and 3.8 million unpaid family caregivers. By 2040, the shortfall will be much larger: 355,000 paid workers, and the family and friends shortfall will be a shocking 11 million.”⁴

Dignity Alliance, respectfully, urges the Committee on Health Care Financing to favorably report S775/H1232 as quickly as possible, since it may take the federal government additional time to approve the requested waiver.

In the event that it is not clear in the language of the above bills, we also urge that S808, to allow spouses to serve as paid caregivers, should be included in the definitions found in S775/H1232 in order to obtain the necessary approvals that would be provided through any waiver from the federal government.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding such an important issue to improve the care of older adults and people with disabilities and to support their caregivers.. We must strive to make improvements to ensure the safety and dignity of all.

Contact: Richard T. Moore, Chair, Dignity Alliance Legislative Committee,
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Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, a grass-roots coalition of aging and disability service and advocacy organizations and supporters, works to secure fundamental changes in the provision of long-term services, support, and care. A coalition of more than 30 organizations, committed to a new vision of dignity and care for older and disabled people in Massachusetts! Positions are not necessarily the opinions of all members.

³ <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00103.022>

⁴ [The future of U.S. caregiving: High demand, scarce workers | Reuters](#)