



Association on Aging in New York

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Memorandum in Support of S. 676 (Hannon) same as A. 1323 (Rosenthal)

An act to amend the Public Health Law, in relation to identification of caregivers.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT: At any given time, 4.1 million New Yorkers provide varying degrees of unpaid care to adults who have limitations in their daily activities. The total value of the unpaid care provided to individuals in need of long-term services and supports amounts to \$32 billion every year.

To meet the challenges of a surging population of older adults, New York State must develop methods to enable family caregivers to continue to support their loved ones at home and in the community, with the goal of improving and enhancing health outcomes, coordination and quality in care transitions. The CARE Act is a crucial step in empowering family caregivers to be successful in their responsibilities to loved ones.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) estimates that \$17 billion in Medicare funds are spent each year on unnecessary hospital readmissions for which hospitals are now penalized under the Affordable Care Act. Reducing hospital readmissions is critical not just for the health of patients, but also for the state's economic well-being.

Once a patient leaves the hospital, family caregivers become the front line of defense against avoidable and costly readmissions. The New York State Office for the Aging's 2009 report, *Sustaining Information Caregivers: Caregiver Support Program Participants Survey*, concluded that caregiver support services and community resources, such as those provided by Area Agencies on Aging, help caregivers provide care longer and may also help delay or prevent nursing home placement.

The Association on Aging in New York supports S. 676, legislation requiring hospitals to, among other things, provide a patient with the opportunity to designate a caregiver in the patient's medical record; require a hospital to notify the designated caregiver when their loved one is being discharged home or transferred to another facility; discuss the patient's plan of care with the designated caregiver prior to the patient's discharge; require a hospital to offer to provide instructions to the designated caregiver in certain aftercare tasks prior to a patient's discharge.

New York's Public Health Law does not reflect the current state of healthcare delivery, which has shorter hospital stays and a greater reliance on families and friends to provide home care. It fails to address the need to identify, engage, and train family caregivers in hospital discharge planning and implementation.

For these reasons, the Association on Aging in New York supports the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura A. Cameron", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Laura A. Cameron, Executive Director