

*A note on Mother's Day...*

## **Celebrating a Gift**

Every year, we set aside one particular day in May to celebrate the Mothers in our lives. Flowers, gifts, family dinners, and special cards are given with gratitude to the women who spend their days making the lives of others just a little bit better.

The business of providing personal care and support is essential in everyone's life, particularly for those children and adults who face functional challenges every day. After dealing with a pandemic and two years of fallout, it is more important than ever to look at the American system of care delivery--and how we can leverage lessons learned due to COVID-19. These include: (1) the impact of isolation, (2) the supply chain crisis, (3) lack of transportation, and (4) inflexible work places. It is important to utilize these lessons to make a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable Americans going forward.

Our population is getting older. The number of Americans age 65 and over is projected to more than double by 2060, and will amount to nearly a quarter of the population. Not only will it be important for the American structure of care delivery to be strong to serve these individuals, but we must also acknowledge that elder individuals may need assistance with activities of daily life (ADLs).

There are other populations across the country who also need help with ADLs. Not only do elder individuals need help, but young people may as well. People with disabilities make up one in four of the individuals in the United States, according to the Census. In addition, we are learning about the effects of long-COVID, and more resources will be needed to understand how this issue may affect individuals for years to come.

Being at home for some is an important celebrated moment on Mother's Day. Living at home allows people more choice and control of their environment. Many people with disabilities and elders prefer to receive care at home and in their own communities. COVID-19 has made clear the importance of providing home and community based services (HCBS), and as a result, people are finally talking openly about unpaid caregiving, the financial and mental health issues caregiving may have on people who also have full time jobs, and children who may be caring for an older relative while also completing their education.

In order to honor the women who have cared for us and others, we must invest financial resources in the people and the programs that support HCBS. Personal care services are needed so that working moms and grandmothers can get back to their jobs that financially support their families.

Providing HCBS is not a new idea, and COVID-19 has emphasized that we can't take these types of assistance for granted. Congress has a window to invest \$150 billion into HCBS, and it is crucial that this step is taken so we can continue to build our nation's care infrastructure, both at the governmental and private levels. Long-term investments in the quality of care of our loved ones and opportunities for workers at all income levels (women make up a majority of personal care professionals), must be made so that stable, high quality care can be accessed and provided to all who need it.

This year, let us celebrate the women who run the world, but also think about the bigger picture. Advocates and policymakers must work together to build structural and financial solutions to recognize that care work is *real* work that matters to not only to our economy, but also to the millions of us whose lives are made better because our Moms care.