

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Phyllis Mundy

DATE: January 5, 2011

SUBJECT: Reintroduction of Legislation – PA Family Caregiver Support Program (*Formerly HB 245 of the 2009-2010 Legislative Session*)

I plan to reintroduce legislation to remove barriers to Pennsylvania's Family Caregiver Support Program by updating outdated guidelines and reimbursement and grant limits. The intent is to allow our local area agencies on aging (AAAs) to take full advantage of the state funding that is appropriated for this program.

Pennsylvania's Family Caregiver Support Program – enacted in 1990 – provides eligible family members financial support in caring for an older relative at home. As this law is currently written, qualified families may receive up to \$200 per month to assist with out-of-pocket expenses, such as respite care and adult briefs. In addition, one-time grants up to \$2,000 are available for home modifications and assistive devices. The program also provides other services including assessments, care management, and caregiving counseling and training to all enrolled participants, regardless of income.

The federal Family Caregiver Support Program, established in 2000, was largely modeled on Pennsylvania's program with the exception that it does not require the caregiver and care recipient to be related or live together. The result is that many area agencies on aging are often unable to fully utilize the state funding that is available despite having a waiting list. This has become a continual, upward trend.

My legislation recognizes that today's informal, unpaid caregivers are not limited to traditional family members by making Pennsylvania's guidelines consistent with the federal program. It would also provide the first adjustment to the reimbursement and grant limits since the program was created in 1990.

It is important to note that these changes would not have a fiscal impact on the Commonwealth since the department would merely be working within its existing state appropriation. Pennsylvania's Family Caregiver Support Act (Act 204 of 1990) stipulates that the program is not an entitlement and that services shall only be made available to the extent that funding is appropriated by the General assembly.

Lastly, this legislation is a win not only for caregivers and seniors but for the Commonwealth's taxpayers as allowing older residents to age at home is far less costly than institutional care. The economic value of Pennsylvania's caregivers has been estimated at more than \$15 billion a year. Without the support of these unsung heroes, Pennsylvania would face even greater fiscal challenges.

This bill passed the House unanimously both last session (HB 245) and the 2007-2008 Legislative Session (HB 1830).

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Please contact Kris Bernard in my Harrisburg office at 783-1614 or kbernard@pahouse.net if you would like to co-sponsor this bill.