

Lutheran Services in America, one of the nation's largest networks of health and human service providers, is rooted in a century-long, faith-based commitment to service. Its nearly 300 nonprofit organizations operate in 1,400 communities across 46 states, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands, reaching 1 in 50 people each year. Together, these organizations cultivate caring communities to advance health and opportunity for all, including a focus on supporting and empowering older adults and their family caregivers.



**12.6
Million**

rural family caregivers
in the United States

**\$1.01
Trillion**

in care provided by
family caregivers

The Opportunity: Strengthening Family Caregivers to Strengthen Rural Communities

Family caregivers are a backbone of our health care system and serve as essential partners to both patients and healthcare providers. Nearly 1 in 4 Americans lives in a Health Professional Shortage Area—and 72% of those are in rural communities. With care needs rising as baby boomers start to retire, the landscape is getting even more challenging – making the role of caregivers essential. As family caregivers have long demonstrated, their care and concern for their loved ones drives their deep commitment to providing care – often at the sacrifice of their own work and wellbeing.

What We Do

We activate our national network, including the lived experience of rural family caregivers, people with disabilities, and older adults, to advocate for policies and funding that meet the unique needs of this population, invest in sustainable infrastructure needed to support caregiving needs in rural communities and recognize the urgency of preserving the vitality of rural America.

Why Rural Family Caregiving?

Family caregivers in rural communities often serve as the primary, and sometimes only, source of care for older adults and people with disabilities aging in place. For rural family caregivers across the U.S., emotional, physical, and financial strains of caregiving are magnified:

- Family caregivers experience higher rates of depression, chronic disease, and financial stress than non-caregivers.
- Erosion of rural infrastructure: hospitals closing, workforce shortages, long distances to specialists.
- Informal networks of neighbors, churches, and volunteer first responders fill gaps for rural family caregivers but cannot be a substitute for formal support systems.

Support for and investments in caregiving programs ensure family caregivers better maintain their own health and well-being and support their loved ones to remain in their homes and communities longer.

Amplifying our United, Faith-Based Voice

To better meet the needs of rural family caregivers, people with disabilities, and older adults, while also strengthening the workforce in rural communities, we call on stakeholders to support the following priorities:

▶ Pass the Credit for Caring Act

- **Expand eligibility and awareness** to ensure rural family caregivers can fully access and benefit from the credit.
- **Cover a broad range of qualified expenses**, including in-home care, adult day services, home modifications, assistive technology, transportation, and respite care.
- **Align the credit with rural workforce needs** by helping family caregivers remain employed while continuing to provide care.
- **Pair the tax credit with investments** in home- and community-based services to address gaps in rural care infrastructure.

▶ Increase Funding for Respite Care

- **Reduce family caregiver stress and prevent burnout** through increased capacity for temporary relief via short-term support for the older adult or person with a disability.
- **Improve access to publicly funded respite programs**, including Medicaid and OAA funded programs, through care coordination, vouchers, and training.
- **Deliver reliable support for rural family caregivers** who face limited services, workforce shortages, and long travel distances.
- **Support a variety of respite services**, including those delivered in the home, through adult day programs, or in short-term residential settings.
- **Support Access to Title III Programs Under Older Americans Act (OAA)**
- **Increase capacity to deliver critical home- and community-based services (HCBS)** that enable rural older adults to remain healthy and independent.
- **Bridge geographic and service gaps and increase options for independence and choice** in rural areas by bringing assistance directly into the homes and communities of older adults.
- **Facilitate access to a range of critical services** such as transportation, case management, in-home assistance, and meal programs.

