

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 7, 2002

Dear Colleague:

Each year, over 26 million Americans care for an adult family member who is chronically ill or disabled. An estimated 18 million children have chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions that place significant demands on their parental caregivers. Nearly 4 million Americans of all ages who have mental retardation or another developmental disability live with their families. These numbers are astounding; if services provided by family caregivers were replaced by paid services it would cost nearly \$200 billion annually.

This is only the start of a growing national issue. As the Baby Boomer generation ages, we will witness an unprecedented rise in the number of people who will require long term care, and the current problems that family caregivers face on a daily basis will only grow. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, PBS will be broadcasting a two-hour primetime special, "And Thou Shalt Honor..." which will be exploring the coming challenge. We commend PBS for their dedication to this issue and hope that you and your constituents will find time to watch this important broadcast and to further explore the topic through their website, <http://www.ihoushalthonor.org>.

Recognizing the importance of family caregivers and their unique needs, we also urge you to co-sponsor the *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2002*. Passed unanimously out of the Senate HELP Committee, the *Lifespan Respite Care Act* would provide money for states to enact respite care programs. These services often make the critical difference between being able to care for a family member at home and having to place him or her in a nursing facility or other long term care facility. Respite care provides the best of both worlds: it allows people to be cared for by the people that know them best, their family, and it reduces the tremendous economic cost that would be incurred if those same people were taken care of outside their homes.

The issue of the long term care of our elderly and disabled looms large over the future of our health care system. We encourage you to learn more about the problems we face, to watch this informative show, and to co-sponsor the *Lifespan Respite Care Act*. This bill provides some measure of support to those who struggle daily to provide their loved ones with the care they so desperately need.

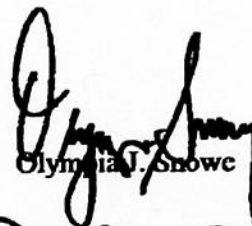
Sincerely yours,



Hillary Rodham Clinton



Barbara A. Mikulski



Olympia J. Snowe



John Breaux