

Connecticut General Assembly



PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

Media Advisory

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New AARP Report Points out Need for Better Family-Friendly Work Policies ***Affects Estimated 486,000 Connecticut Residents***

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HARTFORD – At any given time, nearly half a million Connecticut residents care for elders or disabled relatives, according to a new report released by the AARP. For the approximately 486,000 Connecticut residents who bear this responsibility, finding the time to give critical care can take a financial, as well as emotional, toll. In “Valuing the Invaluable: 2011 Update – The Growing Contributions and Costs of Family Caregiving,” the AARP reports that in Connecticut alone this unpaid contribution to society equals approximately \$5.8 million. And these estimates could be conservative, as they do not include caregivers under the age of 18 or those who give care in ways other than so-called “activities of daily living” (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing, or administering medicine.

“This report is clear evidence of the need for more family-friendly work policies,” said Teresa C. Younger, executive director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), a research and policy arm of the Connecticut General Assembly. “Nearly 65 percent of primary caregivers in most families are women, although more men are stepping up. Taking time off from work to care for a loved one has a direct impact on the erosion of a working woman’s Social Security benefits, as well as her long-term asset-building potential, job security and career mobility.”

Indeed, according to the report, income and benefits lost due to time taken to care for relatives in need are approximately \$283,716 for men and \$324,044 for women. There is also the significant toll to mental health and wellbeing; caregivers are more liable to suffer from stress-related illnesses such as depression.

“With deep cuts to safety nets, such as we are experiencing here in Connecticut and across the country, the burden of caregiving will continue to increase significantly and women, in particular, are experiencing greater-than-ever strain on their finances and mental health,” said Younger. “We need to recognize these contributions for what they are, and enact policies that give people flex time and telecommuting options, for example, to help them balance their work life with their home life responsibilities. Our state’s recently enacted paid sick leave legislation was a step in the right direction, but it does not allow for time off to care for one’s parents. In addition, on a national level, we need to enhance the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), of which Connecticut was a pioneer.”

In fact, in its list of about a dozen policy recommendations, the AARP cites family-friendly work policies first, and strengthening FMLA third in importance. As part of its mandate to enhance women’s economic security, the PCSW will be working with the Legislature on future policy concerning both topics.

To read the full report: <http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/ltc/i51-caregiving.pdf>

About the PCSW: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1973 under Sec. 46a of the Connecticut General Statutes to study and improve Connecticut women’s economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions and to work toward the elimination of gender discrimination. As a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly, the agency monitors, critiques and recommends changes to legislation in order to inform public policy, and assesses programs and practices in all State agencies for their effect on the state’s women. The PCSW serves as a liaison between government and its diverse constituents, and convenes stakeholders, including the business, non-profit and educational communities, local governments, and the media, in order to promote awareness of women’s issues.