Joint Meeting of the RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council and Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Hosted by the Administration for Community Living
Wednesday, July 29, 2026 | 12:00 - 4:30 PM ET

Call to Order and Welcome Remarks

Jonathan Westin, Aging Services Program Specialist with Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living (ACL) and lead staffer for the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Council, called the meeting to order, thanked participants, and introduced Mary Lazare, Principal Deputy Administrator serving as the senior official performing the duties of the ACL Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging.

Mary Lazare welcomed attendees and reaffirmed that caregiving remains ACL's top priority, emphasizing the critical role of the nation's 63 million caregivers in providing essential support, compassion, and services that enable individuals to remain active in their communities. She highlighted growing challenges facing the caregiving system, including an aging population, smaller family networks, and increasing numbers of older adults without traditional support systems, warning that demand for care is outpacing the supply of caregivers. Mary praised the RAISE and Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (SGRG) Councils for advancing caregiving awareness and policy, thanked members for their service, and encouraged them to remain engaged advocates whose lived experiences and voices are vital to shaping the future of caregiver support.

Implementing the National Strategy Update: Perspectives from the Philanthropic and Public Sectors

Mary Lazare expressed enthusiasm about the distinguished panel of speakers and highlighted their contributions to advancing caregiving, aging, and family support initiatives. She recognized Rani Snyder, President of the John A. Hartford Foundation (JAHF) for promoting age-friendly health systems, Todd Lloyd, Senior Associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, for his leadership in kinship care and child welfare policy, and Elizabeth Field, COO of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, for her expertise in military family and caregiver support, emphasizing the importance of their partnerships and expertise in strengthening outcomes for caregivers and families.

Following Mary's introduction, each panelist gave their remarks.

Rani Snyder: Rani thanked ACL and Mary for her leadership in making family caregiving a national priority and highlighted the JAHF's long-standing commitment to supporting older adults, people with disabilities, and family caregivers. She noted that the Foundation's caregiving work began nearly a

decade ago and has been closely aligned with the RAISE Family Caregivers Act and the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers (National Strategy). Snyder emphasized that caregivers are essential to age-friendly healthcare and community living, and that the Foundation's work focuses on age-friendly health systems, caregiver support, and serious illness and end-of-life care.

Snyder also described the Foundation's partnership with ACL and the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) to help develop and implement the National Strategy through policy research, state learning collaboratives, caregiver education, respite and assessment tools, and public awareness efforts. She highlighted philanthropy's role in advancing caregiving through advocacy, research, coalition-building, and support for initiatives such as the Caregiver Nation Coalition and the Caregiving in the U.S. 2025 report. Looking ahead, she said the Foundation will continue investing in age-friendly care, community-based caregiver supports, and policies that strengthen both family caregivers and the direct care workforce, while stressing the importance of strong public-private partnerships and cross-sector collaboration.

Todd Lloyd: Todd introduced the Annie E. Casey Foundation's work supporting children and families through grantmaking, technical assistance, and public system reform, particularly in child welfare and foster care. He focused on kinship caregiving, explaining that it includes grandparents, relatives, close family friends, and other trusted adults who step in to care for children during family crises. Lloyd emphasized that kinship caregivers play a critical role in maintaining family and community connections, improving stability for children and producing better outcomes than traditional foster care placements. He outlined the continuum of kinship care and noted that support and resources vary significantly across arrangements, with informal and kinship diversion caregivers often receiving the least assistance despite caring for large numbers of children.

Lloyd highlighted significant growth in kinship care over the past 15 years, driven by policy changes and a growing "kin-first" approach within the child welfare system that prioritizes placement with relatives whenever possible. He described the Foundation's investments in research, policy development, and technical assistance to strengthen kinship care, including studies on state policies, kinship diversion practices, and caregiver support systems. He shared examples of state-level reforms in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Maryland that expanded kinship navigation services, improved licensing processes, increased financial supports, strengthened legal protections, and promoted culture change within child welfare agencies. Lloyd concluded by reaffirming the Annie E. Casey Foundation's commitment to building evidence, advancing policy reform, supporting advocacy efforts across all states, scaling kin-first practices, and ensuring that the voices and experiences of kinship caregivers remain central to shaping future policies and supports.

Elizabeth Field: Elizabeth described the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's mission to support military and veteran caregivers through partnerships, research, advocacy, and direct services. Founded by Senator Elizabeth Dole in 2012 after she recognized the lack of support available to family caregivers of wounded service members and veterans, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation focuses on addressing the unique challenges faced by military and veteran caregivers. Field emphasized the organization's data-driven approach, highlighting research conducted with RAND that estimates there are approximately 100 million caregivers in the United States, including 14.3 million military and veteran caregivers. She noted

that many military and veteran caregivers face significant economic hardship, mental health challenges, and social isolation, particularly those caring for veterans under age 60, making support for this population a key organizational priority.

Field outlined the Foundation's new strategic plan, which focuses on four interconnected priorities: mental wellness, economic mobility, support for children in military and veteran caregiving households, and strengthening caregiver support systems across healthcare, workplaces, schools, and communities. She discussed the Foundation's efforts to align its work with the National Strategy through research, public awareness campaigns such as Hidden Heroes, advocacy, caregiver inclusion in healthcare decision-making, and direct assistance programs that provide emergency financial support and resource navigation services. She also highlighted the Foundation's newly launched National Blueprint for Action for Supporting Military and Veteran Caregivers, a companion framework to the National Strategy that provides practical actions for organizations across sectors. Field concluded by emphasizing the importance of cross-sector partnerships, evidence-based policymaking, workplace supports, and continued collaboration with ACL and other stakeholders to improve outcomes for caregivers and the people they support.

Discussant Summary: Carol Zernial opened the discussion by thanking the panelists and acknowledging the important role philanthropy plays in advancing caregiving initiatives through partnerships with government, nonprofits, and the private sector. She noted that caregiving intersects with many areas, including healthcare, children and families, aging, disability, technology, and workforce development, and emphasized that successful implementation of the National Strategy will require collaboration across these sectors. She then asked the panel the following questions.

Question 1: What role do you see philanthropy playing in helping to shape the marketplace so that it advances the goals of the National Strategy and improves the daily lives of caregiving?

- Rani Snyder shared philanthropy can play a critical role in shaping the caregiving marketplace by building partnerships between healthcare systems and community-based organizations that already provide caregiver supports. She highlighted the Aging and Disability Business Institute, a collaboration among the JAHF, ACL, and USAging, which works to create business models and contractual relationships that connect healthcare providers with Area Agencies on Aging and other community organizations rather than having health systems develop separate services on their own. This approach helps integrate caregiver support services into broader healthcare delivery and better serves individuals and families in their communities. Snyder also emphasized that philanthropy should ensure caregivers and care recipients have a meaningful voice in shaping programs, services, and innovations. She stressed that foundations have an important responsibility to elevate lived experience and embed the perspectives of caregivers and patients into policy, program development, and decision-making so that solutions are responsive to the real needs of those they are intended to support.

Question 2: How can philanthropy leverage a collective impact approach to bring organizations together around a few key priorities, a few key goals, work collectively to make meaningful progress around this national strategy, and what role can philanthropy play in identifying and advancing those shared priorities?

- Todd Lloyd explained that philanthropy plays a critical role in helping government accelerate learning, test new approaches, and move successful ideas into implementation. He noted that foundations can reduce the risks associated with innovation by supporting pilot programs and new strategies that government agencies may be hesitant to pursue on their own. Philanthropy also has a unique ability to convene stakeholders across sectors, including individuals with lived experience, to build awareness, foster collaboration, and align efforts around shared goals, such as those outlined in the National Strategy. Additionally, Lloyd emphasized the importance of philanthropy's long-term investment in policy advocacy and nonprofit infrastructure, supporting independent organizations that work across multiple administrations to advance policy change. By funding research, advocacy, and community-based organizations over time, philanthropy helps translate proven practices into sustainable policies, funding streams, and support systems that improve outcomes for families and caregivers.

Question 3: In the veteran space, particularly, do you have an example of a public-private partnership or a coalition that has helped or is helping to bring an effective approach to scale?

- Elizabeth Field highlighted a successful public-private partnership between the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and private respite care providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, they launched a respite care pilot program for military and veteran caregivers that proved highly effective in reducing caregiver burden and anxiety. After the pilot concluded, the program was transitioned to the VA, and a subsequent VA evaluation found it to be both efficient and impactful. Based on these positive results, the VA is now expanding the program more broadly, demonstrating how collaborative pilot programs can lead to sustainable, large-scale caregiver support.
- Rani Snyder noted that public-private partnerships can take many forms and highlighted the JAHF's role in supporting the development of innovative dementia care models. She explained that the Foundation convened caregivers, clinicians, policymakers, and federal partners to explore what a comprehensive payment and care system for people living with dementia and their caregivers should look like. Through these convenings and collaborative efforts, the JAHF helped inform the CMS GUIDE Model for dementia care. While noting that the Foundation was only one of many contributors, Snyder described the model as a successful example of philanthropy working alongside government and other stakeholders to advance caregiver support, and she expressed hope that the demonstration program will eventually become a permanent benefit for individuals living with dementia, their family caregivers, clinicians, and respite care providers.
- Todd Lloyd explained that advancing kinship caregiving requires both the spread of successful innovations and the scaling of proven practices through policy change. He described how states test new approaches, learn from implementation, and share best practices, which can eventually be adopted more broadly through state and federal reforms. As an example, he highlighted more than a decade of work to improve kinship caregiver licensing standards, supported by extensive research, state policy surveys, and advocacy efforts, which have helped caregivers gain access to greater financial support, legal protections, and services while improving outcomes for children. Lloyd also emphasized the need for stronger financial assistance and tangible supports for kinship caregivers, noting that grandparents and other relatives save child welfare systems billions of dollars annually and should not have to shoulder those responsibilities without adequate resources and support.

Question 4: Where do you believe philanthropy can make the greatest difference in accelerating the goals of the National Strategy over the next few years?

- Elizabeth Field emphasized that philanthropy could have the greatest impact when it is willing to think big and invest in the capacity needed to drive large-scale change. She noted that while many organizations are working to support caregivers, no single organization can achieve the level of impact needed on its own. Instead, philanthropy can help accelerate progress by funding cross-sector initiatives with clearly defined shared goals, supporting both innovation and proven approaches, and encouraging collaboration among organizations. Field also stressed the importance of investing in organizational capacity, including essential but often overlooked administrative and operational functions, which are critical to helping caregiver-focused organizations sustain their work and successfully deliver services and support.
- Rani Snyder highlighted that the National Strategy's broad design is one of its strengths, providing a flexible roadmap that allows organizations across sectors to contribute according to their unique missions and priorities while working toward common goals. She noted that supporting the nation's 63 million caregivers requires many different approaches, and the strategy helps align and connect those efforts. Snyder highlighted philanthropy's unique ability to convene stakeholders, foster collaboration, share best practices, and build understanding across communities in ways that government agencies often cannot. She also pointed to Grantmakers in Aging as a valuable network that brings together funders and organizations to learn from one another, develop partnerships, and coordinate efforts, emphasizing that cross-sector and cross-generational collaboration will be increasingly important for advancing caregiver support and implementing the National Strategy.
- Todd Lloyd shared the National Strategy is valuable because it serves as an organizing framework that aligns federal agencies, states, and public-private partners around shared goals for supporting caregivers. He noted that philanthropy can help advance the Strategy by convening stakeholders, supporting innovation and pilot programs, leveraging established networks and infrastructure, and building evidence to inform policy and practice. While he emphasized that long-term sustainability and large-scale implementation ultimately depend on government funding and leadership, he stressed that philanthropic organizations play an important role in supporting, strengthening, and accelerating those efforts through strong partnerships with federal and state agencies.

Question 5: What is one action that the public sector could take in partnership with philanthropy that would accelerate or make implementation easier or more effective? What would you like to see the public sector doing in partnership?

- Todd Lloyd shared that the public sector could play a critical role in improving data collection on kinship caregiving, particularly in situations known as "kinship diversion," which are sometimes referred to as the "shadow" or "hidden" foster care system because limited administrative data exists about them. He noted that without reliable data, policymakers cannot fully understand or address the challenges these families face. Lloyd suggested that government agencies could leverage existing data systems, technology, and AI tools to collect additional information that would help ensure kin caregivers are appropriately supported rather than coerced into caregiving arrangements, monitor children's outcomes and family reunification efforts, and better protect the interests of children, caregivers, and families. He concluded that increasing the availability and quality of data is essential to understanding how kinship caregiving occurs and developing effective policies and support.

- Rani Snyder noted that family caregivers and the direct care workforce should be viewed as complementary parts of the same care system, and she encouraged federal and state governments to strengthen support for both groups together. She noted that the JAHF has supported initiatives with organizations such as PHI, the National Alliance for Caregiving, and Advancing States to promote policies and practices that integrate family caregivers and direct care workers into care teams. Examples included developing policy resources and working with nine states to improve collaboration between these groups, with one state creating a shared training curriculum for both family caregivers and direct care workers. Snyder stressed that stronger partnerships between caregivers and the direct care workforce are essential for supporting healthy communities and meeting growing care needs, and she expects this area to become increasingly important.
- Elizabeth Field emphasized that stronger coordination between the Veterans Health Administration and community healthcare providers is needed because many veterans receive care outside the VA system, yet communication, health record sharing, and care coordination between the two systems remain limited. She noted that while private companies are working on solutions, philanthropy can play a unique role by focusing on outcomes rather than profit, helping drive collaboration, innovation, and risk-taking that better support veterans and their caregivers. Field described philanthropy as the "glue" that can help connect stakeholders, improve integration across healthcare systems, and advance the goals of the National Strategy in ways that might not otherwise occur through market-driven efforts alone.

Closing Remarks: Carol Zernial thanked the panelists for highlighting the many ways philanthropy, government, and the private sector can work together to support caregivers and advance the National Strategy. She reflected on key themes from the discussion, noting that philanthropy can serve as a neutral convener for diverse perspectives, that making caregivers and caregiving challenges more visible is essential, and that organizations need sufficient operational capacity and funding to support caregivers effectively on a day-to-day basis. She also emphasized the importance of supporting both family caregivers and the direct care workforce, recognizing the growing need for collaboration across sectors, states, and communities. Carol concluded by thanking the panelists for their leadership and ongoing efforts to strengthen caregiver support and caregiving policy nationwide.

A roll call of the council members followed.

RAISE/SGRG Council's Accomplishments (2023-2026): A Retrospective.

Mary Lazare transitioned the meeting to a retrospective review of the accomplishments of the RAISE and SGRG Councils and introduced two panelists who would share their perspectives on the Council's work and impact. She introduced Dr. Jennifer Wolff, the Eugene and Mildred Lipitz Professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Director of the Roger and Flo Lipitz Center to Advance Policy in Aging and Disability and Ana Beltran, Director of the Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network.

Following Mary's introductions, Jennifer Wolff reviewed the RAISE Council's accomplishments and Ana Beltran reviewed the SGRG Council's accomplishments.

RAISE Council Accomplishments: Dr. Jennifer Wolff reflected on her experience serving on the RAISE Council, noting that as a researcher who has studied family caregiving for more than two decades, she has been impressed by the significant progress made through the RAISE Act and the National Strategy. She explained that after the council was seated in July 2023, members quickly began their work, drawing on an extensive analysis of public comments submitted in response to the initial National Strategy. Those comments helped shape the council's priorities and guided discussions on key caregiving issues.

Wolff highlighted several major areas of focus that emerged during the council's review process, including expanding access to respite care, strengthening support for the direct care workforce, and improving collaboration between family caregivers and paid care workers. She also emphasized the council's recognition of caregiving as a life-course issue, leading to increased attention on youth caregivers, kinship caregivers, and grandparent-led households. Through regular working group meetings and joint sessions with the SGRG Council, members engaged in detailed discussions with experts and stakeholders to refine the updated strategy. These efforts ultimately contributed to new recommendations, including a dedicated focus on the intersection of family caregiving and the direct care workforce, as well as expanded recognition of the needs of kinship caregivers and other underserved caregiving populations.

SGRG Council Accomplishments: Ana Beltran described the work of the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (SGRG) Council, noting that although its name focuses on grandparents, the council has always taken an inclusive approach that encompasses all kinship caregivers, including aunts, uncles, siblings, and close family friends. She highlighted the strong collaboration between the SGRG and RAISE Councils, including joint meetings and shared efforts to update the National Strategy based on public input. Public comments underscored the need for greater legal supports and services for kinship families, many of whom are caring for children outside of the foster care system and often lack the legal authority needed to enroll children in school, access healthcare, or make important decisions on their behalf. The council also emphasized raising awareness of financial supports such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) child-only grants and strengthening access to kin-specific foster care licensing standards, which more than 20 states are now implementing to better reflect the unique circumstances of kinship caregivers.

Beltran also noted that the SGRG Council was charged not only with developing recommendations but also with serving as an information and assistance resource for kinship caregivers. To support this role, the council developed practical tip sheets on topics such as federal tax credits available to kinship families, as well as guidance on working with professionals, maintaining important records, and accessing services and supports. She concluded by expressing appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the council and collaborate with the RAISE Council to strengthen support for kinship caregivers and the children in their care.

Ana Beltran then encouraged council members to share their reflections on the work of the RAISE and SGRG Councils.

Council Reflections:

- Kezia Scales reflected on her experience serving on the RAISE Council, describing it as an incredibly rich and rewarding opportunity to collaborate with members from diverse backgrounds, expertise, and lived experiences. She emphasized the value of the council's extensive discussions, both in public meetings and working sessions, noting that members devoted significant effort to shaping updates to the National Strategy, including the development of a new goal and careful refinement of recommendations. Scales highlighted the council as a powerful vehicle for bringing together different perspectives to advance meaningful progress in support of family caregivers.
- Jennifer Wolff emphasized that the National Strategy has provided an important framework for advancing caregiver support and praised the significant progress achieved since its implementation. She noted that the Strategy's impact extends beyond philanthropy and has contributed to important policy changes at the federal level, including the creation of Medicare billing codes for caregiver education and CMS requirements that family caregivers receive education and training during hospital discharge and home health care transitions. Wolff highlighted a growing recognition of family caregivers as essential partners in care and said this shift has translated into concrete policies that better support caregivers and the individuals they assist.
- Felicia Gibson shared her perspective as someone with lived caregiving experience, explaining that serving on the RAISE Council helped her better understand how change can be achieved through collaboration among government, nonprofit, and private-sector organizations. She said the experience showed her that caregivers can make a difference at both the local and national levels and provided a sense of empowerment rather than helplessness. Gibson also spoke about the importance of realizing she is not alone in facing caregiving challenges, noting that hearing others identify the same issues and advocate for similar solutions has been inspiring and given her hope.
- Nancy Richey, speaking as a mother and caregiver, echoed Felicia Gibson's remarks about the isolation many caregivers experience. She expressed excitement about the updated National Strategy and emphasized the importance of ensuring caregivers are aware of the resources, supports, and policy advancements being developed on their behalf. Richey said that making caregivers aware of these efforts can help them feel less alone and more supported.

Review of the Updates to the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers

The RAISE Co-Chairs Jonathan Cottor and Carol Zernial and the SGRG Chair, Keith Lowhorne discussed the updates to the National Strategy. They began by reviewing the Council's approach to updating the Strategy, then reviewed the updates to each Strategy Goal. They then turned to Jonathan Westin, who concluded with a review of Federal Actions.

Carol Zernial began by noting that the creation of the RAISE and SGRG Councils marked the first major national focus on caregiving since the establishment of the National Family Caregiver Support Program in the year 2000 and highlighted the growing momentum, awareness, and policy progress that have followed. Zernial emphasized that the councils intentionally adopted a broad and inclusive approach that considers the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, medically fragile children, kinship caregivers, youth caregivers, working caregivers, and the direct care workforce. She described the National Strategy as a living document that will continue to evolve based on caregiver needs and public input, noting that extensive feedback from caregivers, experts, public meetings, and council deliberations helped identify gaps, address barriers, and shape the updated Strategy. She thanked

caregivers, council members, and partners for their contributions and stressed that their voices and lived experiences were essential to the development of the updated Strategy.

Approach to Updating the National Strategy: Carol Zernial explained that the updated National Strategy was shaped by extensive public input, expert engagement, and council deliberations, with a focus on identifying gaps, addressing barriers, and responding to the real-world needs of caregivers. She highlighted several key updates, including expanded attention to respite care and kinship caregiving, as well as the elevation of direct care workforce issues into a new standalone Goal 6.

Goal 1: Increasing Awareness and Outreach: Carol Zernial stressed that many individuals still do not identify themselves as caregivers or know about available resources. While Goal 1 itself remains unchanged, the councils refined priorities to emphasize effective communications, caregiver-inclusive policies and protocols, cross-sector collaboration, caregiver engagement in planning and decision-making, and the promotion of caregiver-friendly practices. She also called for stronger outreach through healthcare systems, employers, community organizations, and state and local planning processes, emphasizing that caregiver voices must remain central to future efforts.

Goal 2: Advancing Partnerships and Meaningful Engagement with Family Caregivers: Jonathan Cottor emphasized that family caregivers play critical roles in coordinating care, managing medications, navigating systems, and providing complex care, yet are often not fully recognized as partners in the care process. Drawing on his own experience as a parent caregiver, he noted that while initiatives such as the CARE Act have improved caregiver recognition, more work is needed to consistently include caregivers across healthcare and service settings. The councils maintained the goal's original intent but refined its priorities to strengthen caregiver engagement and recognition, improve caregiver assessments, increase identification and documentation of caregivers, and expand caregiver-inclusive policies and practices. Key updates include recognizing family caregivers, when desired by the care recipient, as essential partners and co-leaders in care, documenting their roles in health records, using evidence-informed assessments that evaluate caregiver capacity and support needs, honoring care recipient preferences, and strengthening professional training so providers can better identify caregivers, make referrals, and incorporate caregiver education into healthcare and long-term services and supports systems.

Goal 3: Strengthen Services and Supports for Family Caregivers: Keith Lowhorne noted that public feedback on the 2022 National Strategy consistently highlighted three priorities: expanding respite care, addressing the direct care workforce crisis, and better supporting kinship and grandfamilies. As a result, the updated Strategy strengthens recommendations in these areas, including elevating direct care workforce issues to a new standalone Goal 6. Lowhorne emphasized that respite care remains a cornerstone of caregiver support and that caregivers with lived experience should help shape new programs and services. He also stressed the importance of expanding support for all kinship and grandfamilies, particularly those outside the formal child welfare system, through greater access to respite services, legal assistance, and kinship navigator programs.

Personal Reflections: Speaking from his own experience as a grandparent caregiver, Lowhorne described the significant challenges faced by kinship and grandfamilies, many of whom provide care with limited financial resources and little formal support. He stressed that lack of respite care contributes to caregiver

burnout and that affordable legal assistance is essential for issues such as adoption, guardianship, school enrollment, healthcare access, and future planning. He also called for stronger, evidence-based kinship navigator programs to help families access services and navigate complex systems. Sharing his family's experience raising grandchildren, he emphasized that millions of kinship caregivers step in to raise children because it is the right thing to do, often at great personal and financial sacrifice. Lowhorne noted that kinship families save taxpayers an estimated $10.5 billion annually while raising approximately 2.5 million children, and he urged policymakers to provide these caregivers with greater recognition, support, and resources comparable to those available to foster families.

Goal 4: Financial and Workplace Security for Family Caregivers: Jonathan Cottor explained that Goal 4 focuses on improving the financial security of family caregivers, particularly the many caregivers who are also employed. With seven in ten family caregivers participating in the workforce, caregiving responsibilities often lead to reduced work hours, missed career opportunities, or leaving employment altogether, especially when respite care and other supports are unavailable. The councils noted that financial pressures have intensified since the COVID-19 pandemic as caregiving demands have increased and supportive services have become more difficult to access and afford. To address these challenges, the councils identified priorities including expanding access to financial and workplace support, increasing availability of financial planning tools and counseling, improving employer awareness of caregiver needs, and encouraging workplace benefits and policies that better support caregiving employees. Proposed actions include state caregiver tax credits, broader family and medical leave protections, enhanced employer benefits and workplace flexibility, greater access to financial education resources, and training for employers, financial professionals, and elder law attorneys on available caregiver supports. The councils also refined Goal 4 to explicitly recognize care recipients, emphasizing that their preferences, needs, and well-being should remain central when developing policies and supports for family caregivers.

Goal 5: Data, Research, and Evidence Based Practices to Support Family Caregivers: Jonathan Cottor shared that Goal 5 focuses on ensuring that caregiver policies and programs are informed by high-quality data, research, and both evidence-based and evidence-informed practices. The councils found that caregiving data remains fragmented and often fails to capture the full range of caregiving experiences, particularly those of youth caregivers, kinship caregivers, and families caring for children with serious illnesses, disabilities, or medical complexities. To address these gaps, the updated Strategy prioritizes standardized caregiving definitions and measures, expanded longitudinal and federal data collection, stronger state capacity for caregiver data gathering, increased research on the effectiveness of caregiver interventions, and greater inclusion of underserved caregiver populations in research. Proposed actions include collecting more data on respite and adult day programs, incorporating caregiving questions into school and national surveys, conducting caregiver satisfaction surveys, and improving collaboration among major caregiving researchers. Recognizing that many effective community practices emerge before formal research is available, the Strategy was revised to explicitly support both evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches, allowing innovative programs to be tested, evaluated, replicated, and sustained. The councils also adopted a new outcome calling for the development of nationally representative data on youth caregivers and identified opportunities for ACL and researchers to integrate caregiving measures into existing national surveys, helping build a more complete understanding of caregivers' needs and the supports that work best.

(NEW) Goal 6: Addressing the Direct Care Workforce Shortage: Carol Zernial shared that Goal 6, a new addition to the National Strategy, recognizes the critical and interconnected relationship between family caregivers and the direct care workforce. Zernial explained that the COVID-19 pandemic underscored how dependent caregivers are on direct care workers, including home care aides, personal care attendants, respite providers, certified nursing assistants, direct support professionals, volunteers, and others. While family caregivers provide essential support, they cannot do it alone, and the nation continues to face a significant direct care workforce shortage driven by challenges related to wages, working conditions, workforce stability, and limited career advancement opportunities, particularly in rural, frontier, and tribal communities. The new goal seeks to improve caregivers' access to a high-quality, well-trained direct care workforce by promoting stronger connections between caregivers and care workers, enhancing training and career development opportunities, expanding credentialing and career pathways, and supporting cross-sector strategies for recruitment and retention. The proposed goal includes four outcomes, and the councils view this goal as essential to supporting both caregivers and care recipients and to building a more sustainable caregiving system nationwide.

Federal Actions: Jonathan Westin highlighted the federal actions accompanying the National Strategy, noting that the Strategy is supported by both federal actions plan and a companion document outlining recommended actions for states and communities. He reported that 48 federal actions are currently underway across 11 federal agencies, including ACL, ACF, ASPE, CMS, HRSA, IHS, NIH, NIA, NCI, SAMHSA, AmeriCorps, the Department of Education, and the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. In addition, the 2026 update includes 15 new actions led by six agencies: ACF, ACL, ASPE, IHS, NIH, and NIA. Westin emphasized that these efforts reflect a strong federal commitment to supporting family caregivers and recognized the contributions of federal advisory members and agency partners, noting that the progress made through the RAISE and SGRG Councils would not have been possible without extensive collaboration across HHS and the broader federal government.

Deliberations & Vote of the RAISE & SGRG Councils on the Update to the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers

Mary Lazare transitioned the meeting into the formal voting process. She explained that the purpose of this portion of the meeting was for the RAISE and SGRG Councils to vote to move the updated National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers and its accompanying documents, as presented, into HHS clearance and final review by non-HHS agencies. Mary noted that Jonathan Westin serves as the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the RAISE Council and Nikaela Frederick serves as the DFO for the SGRG Council, and that they would present any votes submitted by absent council members. She clarified that a simple majority of the RAISE Council was required to approve the movement.

Before proceeding to the vote, Jonathan Westin opened the floor for any final questions, comments, or deliberations from council members. After confirming that there were no additional comments or concerns, he announced that the councils were ready to move forward with the voting process.

Melissa Szasz conducted the roll call vote for both councils, beginning with the RAISE Council and concluding with the SGRG Council. Each council member was called individually and asked to cast their vote. For members who were not present, Jonathan Westin presented absentee votes for the RAISE

Council, while Nikaela Frederick presented absentee votes for the SGRG Council. After all votes were recorded, Melissa Szasz asked whether any council members had been missed or wished to change their vote. Receiving no responses, she announced the results: the RAISE Council voted 11-0 in favor, and the SGRG Council voted 7-0 in favor. With unanimous support from both councils, the motion to approve the updated National Strategy.

Looking Ahead: Council Nominations & RAISE/SGRG Councils 3.0

Following the unanimous approval of the updated National Strategy, Mary Lazare led a discussion on how to broaden awareness of the Strategy and its recommendations. She encouraged attendees to think about who needs to receive this information and how it can be effectively shared. Nancy Richey emphasized that outreach should extend beyond family caregivers to include allies and supporters who can help advance caregiving initiatives and advocate for caregiver needs. Building on that point, Mary stressed that ACL is committed to collecting and sharing caregiving resources through its website and encouraged organizations to widely distribute and replicate resources, programs, and best practices so caregivers can more easily find the help they need. She highlighted the importance of engaging stakeholders at every level, including federal and state agencies, community organizations, healthcare providers, employers, financial professionals, and service providers, to ensure caregiving information reaches those who can connect caregivers to support.

Jennifer Wolff added that raising awareness among caregivers is only part of the solution, noting that caregivers often remain invisible within healthcare, education, and long-term services systems. She emphasized the need to educate frontline professionals, such as healthcare providers, educators, and other community-facing workers, so they can identify caregivers and refer them to appropriate resources. Mary agreed, observing that outreach should extend broadly across sectors and professions. She then thanked council members for their years of service, expertise, experience, and dedication, acknowledging the significant contributions they made to the development of the National Strategy. She encouraged members to remain engaged after their terms conclude and announced that ACL would soon issue a Federal Register notice seeking nominations for the next group of council members (RAISE and SGRG 3.0). Concluding the meeting, Mary expressed appreciation to the council chairs, federal staff, and participants, thanked everyone for their commitment to caregivers, and voiced optimism about continuing the work of advancing support for family caregivers nationwide.