

**Kari Benson's Remarks as Prepared
White House Convening on Care
12-12-24 @ 9:00 AM**

- It's a privilege to speak at an event that honors America's family caregivers and direct care professionals, who together make it possible for so many older adults and people with disabilities to live the lives *they* want to live in communities across our nation.
- To provide a visual description, I am a white woman with short brown hair and wear glasses, and today I am wearing ...
- At the Administration for Community Living, or ACL for short, we hear the stories of caregiving in its many forms, including grandparents raising grandchildren, parents providing support throughout the lives of their children with disabilities, or children of all ages supporting parents with disabilities and older parents who want to remain in the house they have called home for decades.
- I myself have been a caregiver.
- <shared personal story>
- And I'm in good company.
- Today more than 53 million people provide \$500 billion a year in unpaid care. They really are the backbone of our national system of long-term care.
- That's why supporting family caregivers is an important part of our mission at ACL.
- The programs we fund help to give family caregivers the support they need to take care of their own health and well-being, so they can continue as caregivers.
 - And quick aside – we fund two national hotlines to help people connect to these services. We have details at [ACL.gov/help](https://acl.gov/help).

- We also support two Congressionally mandated advisory councils: The RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council and the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.
- In 2022 the councils published the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers, which included 350 commitments from 15 federal agencies for specific actions.
 - And as of today federal agencies have completed or made significant progress on most of them.
- But the federal government is just one part of the equation – this really is an all-hands-on-deck, cross-sector effort.
 - And the aging and disability networks – and many of the people in the room today – are key partners, so I want to pause and say thank you!
- Creating a caregiving infrastructure to meet the rapidly growing needs ALSO requires us to address the direct care workforce crisis.
- For a variety of reasons, including low wages, lack of benefits and lack of recognition of the value of their work, there is a critical shortage of the professionals who help with personal care and daily living tasks, provide assistance to support participation in the community, and more.
- As a result, many people with disabilities and older adults cannot get the services they need to live in the community.
- And family caregivers have to take on more – and have fewer opportunities for respite.
- That’s why ACL worked with federal partners to create the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center, which operates with the support of a cross-sector group of organizations.
- The center provides technical assistance and supports collaboration across state systems, service providers and other stakeholders to improve recruiting and retention of direct care professionals.

- And here again, I want to say thank you to many of you in the room who are really driving a lot of this important work.
- As Rosalynn Carter told us, everyone has been, is, will be, or will need a caregiver at some point in their life.
- And many of us will do both.
- That's why strengthening our caregiving infrastructure has become – and has to be – a national priority.
- And that's why we at ACL are proud to work alongside you in this important work. Thank you!