

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 848

By Yager

A RESOLUTION relative to the development of a comprehensive statewide Paid Family Caregiving Policy and Program.

WHEREAS, over one million Tennesseans of all ages are living with disabilities that require the assistance of caregivers; and

WHEREAS, demographic trends are projected to dramatically increase the number of older Tennesseans and those living with disabilities who will require caregiving; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly and state agencies have taken steps to improve compensation for professional caregivers and recruit and train more people for that crucial occupation; and

WHEREAS, despite these efforts, the State of Tennessee is experiencing a workforce crisis that makes it difficult to recruit and retain formal paid caregivers; and

WHEREAS, 930,000 Tennesseans serve as informal caregivers to a family member or loved one, providing approximately 870 million hours of care annually; and

WHEREAS, research shows that the responsibilities of caregiving lead caregivers to experience high rates of physical disability, illness, mental health need, financial insecurity, and disruption to employment; and

WHEREAS, despite Tennesseans' demonstrated dedication to caring for their loved ones, Tennessee ranks 51<sup>st</sup> among the United States and the District of Columbia in the extent and quality of state support provided to family caregivers, according to the 2023 AARP State Scorecard; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee Code Annotated, § 71-5-1402(e), states that Tennessee's "[...] long-term care system shall recognize and value the critical role of the family and other

caregivers in meeting the needs of the elderly and people with physical disabilities", thus underscoring family caregivers' important role in "delaying or preventing the need for more expensive institutional care"; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury previously documented a growing workforce shortage of professional caregivers and concluded that the State should consider providing recurring funding for family caregivers in the April 2022 *Senior Long-Term Care in Tennessee: Trends and Options Report*; and

WHEREAS, the experience of other states demonstrates that financial support for family caregivers is a cost-effective investment that can help alleviate the caregiving crisis and delay or avoid costly institutional care by growing and sustaining this important source of home care for older people and those living with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, a formal paid family caregiving program can help address the State's workforce crisis, as well as protect the employment, health, and financial security of family caregivers; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee does not presently offer a formal paid family caregiving program; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we urge the State of Tennessee, within its Long-Term Services and Supports systems, to develop a comprehensive statewide Paid Family Caregiving Policy and Program, in collaboration with consumers, stakeholders, and advocates, by January 2025 to support family caregivers in the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to Long-Term Services and Supports, Division of TennCare.