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How Paid Family Leave Helps California's Caregivers

*Statement by Kathleen Kelly
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Millions of Americans each year face a serious illness and rely heavily on family caregivers to help them recover from or manage this illness. More than half of these caregivers also have full time jobs. California's Paid Family Leave Law provides families a way to meet both their work and care responsibilities.

With a total of six weeks per year of partially paid leave, families can focus on critical eldercare needs: caring for someone in the terminal stages of an illness or during a health crisis; helping a loved one make the transition from hospital to home; arranging in-home or out-of-home care; organizing a team to care for a parent in a distant town; arranging for and attending medical appointments; managing medications; and numerous other activities of daily life that a formerly independent family member can no longer perform.

When they return to work, these employees are then more able to concentrate on their jobs--a benefit to both employer and employee.

As the wave of Baby Boomers rapidly moves into the position of either needing care or providing it to a frail or elderly parent, as hospital stays are shortened and families are called upon more and more to provide intensive healthcare to loved ones, as women--the traditional caregivers--maintain positions in the workplace and two-income families find it difficult to meet everyday financial obligations, the importance of California's groundbreaking Paid Family Leave Law is clear.

Paid Family Leave is the right law at the right time. Family Caregiver Alliance applauds the California legislature and State Senator Sheila Kuehl for initiating this essential legislation.

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Established in 1977, Family Caregiver Alliance is one of the largest and oldest organizations in the US devoted solely to caregivers. Its pioneering programs--information, education, services, research and advocacy--support and sustain the important work of families and friends caring for loved ones with chronic, disabling health conditions. FCA and its National Center on Caregiving offer programs at local, state and national levels. Visit www.caregiver.org or call (800) 445-8106 for more information.