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Contact: Lisa Cantrell
(417) 623-6049

Georgia Seniors and Their Caregivers Sign 10-Foot Petition Urging GA Congressional Delegation to Protect Medicare, Medicaid Funding as DC Budget Debate Moves Forward

Strong Federal Medicare, Medicaid Funding Key to Preserving Rural Seniors' Access to Quality Care, Protecting Caregiver Jobs Throughout Georgia; Nursing Facilities Generate \$1.5 Billion Annually in State Economic Output, Employ 38,770 Georgians

Macon, GA – Elderly residents, their caregivers and family members from the Oaks at Peake skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility today signed a 10-foot scroll to the Georgia congressional delegation today urging them to respectfully protect Medicare and Medicaid funding in the federal budget as the debate over entitlement reform picks up speed in Washington, D.C.

“Rural seniors’ ongoing access to quality care as well as the jobs of our rural caregivers throughout Georgia are directly tied to the critical budget debate now unfolding in Washington, D.C.,” said Lisa Cantrell, national spokesperson for the CPSC, who travelled from Joplin, MO for the Macon facility event. The Coalition to Protect Senior Care (CPSC) is a national coalition of health care assistants, long-term care nurses, certified nursing assistants and others who deliver round-the-clock, front-line care to seniors “Facilities like The Oaks at Peake are often the largest employers in our rural communities, and are as vital to Georgia’s local jobs base as they are vital to Georgia seniors’ care.”

Emphasizing the fragility of Georgia’s Medicaid program, Cantrell and facility Administrator Renee Jiles also noted that the differential between the actual cost of providing quality care and what Medicaid actually reimburses facilities like Oaks at Peake is \$8.62 per patient day, according to a recent *Eljay* study released by the American Health Care Association (AHCA). “With 70 percent of our facility budget directly related to staffing, it is vital for our Members of Congress to keep in mind that Medicare funding from Washington is critical to bolstering

Medicaid funding from Atlanta,” Jiles said. “Quality patient care is at stake, jobs are at stake, and the very well-being of our community is at stake in this Washington, D.C. debate,” she continued.

Second only to hospitals as the state’s largest health facility employer, Georgia’s skilled nursing and rehab facilities generate \$1.5 billion in state economic activity annually, help support 58,725 local jobs, employ 38,770 Georgians, and are a major local employer of key frontline care staff, according to a study by the Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care created with analytic support from *Avalere Health*, a non-partisan health advisory firm.

According to Nicole Williams, a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) at the facility, strong Medicaid and Medicare funding is also needed to maintain ongoing quality improvement programs now benefitting seniors. “Front line care is a 24/7/365 effort and we have a total commitment to our patients – who are like family members. Lost front line care jobs would mean a threat to quality - - and we must never allow green eye shades to obscure the fact our most vulnerable frail, elderly and disabled patients deserve the best care.”

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Among the Coalition to Protect Senior Care membership are: American Association for Long Term Care Nursing (AALTCN) • Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care • American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA) • American Health Care Association (AHCA) • American Health Quality Association (AHQA) • American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) • American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) • American Society of Health Care Administration Executives (ASHCAE) • Coalition of Women in Long Term Care (COWL) • National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA) • National Association for the Support of Long Term Care (NASL) • National Rural Health Association • Senior Clinician Group