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**Nation's Front Line Caregivers Praise U.S. Representatives' Opposition to Medicare-Financed Nursing Home Care Cuts**

*Letter From 42 Members of Congress – Led by Reps. Tim Walz and Chris Shays – to House Leadership Urging Protection of Quality Nursing Home Care, Key Caregiver Jobs Gains Support*

**Washington, DC (April 24, 2008)** – Citing the negative impact to local seniors as well as the potential loss of key front line caregiver jobs resulting from possible cuts to Medicare-financed nursing home care, a national front line caregiver organization is praising U.S. Reps. Tim Walz (D-MN) and Chris Shays (R-CT) for successfully generating the bipartisan support of 42 lawmakers for their letter urging House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) to help reject any Medicare funding cuts in the weeks ahead.

“On behalf of the nation’s most vulnerable seniors and our front line caregivers who proudly serve them, we extend our gratitude to Reps. Walz, Shays and the 40 other members of Congress from both sides of the aisle now on record urging the U.S. House leadership to oppose cuts to the Medicare-financed nursing home funding that plays a critical role in the provision of high quality care,” stated Lisa Cantrell, a co-founder of the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA), and a national spokesperson for the Coalition to Protect Senior Care.

In addition to Reps. Walz and Shays, who have coordinated the letter effort opposing any Medicare cuts, the following Members of Congress have signed on to the letter:

Neil Abercrombie  
Tom Allen  
Jason Altmire  
Tammy Baldwin  
John Barrow  
Shelley Berkley  
Sanford Bishop  
Vern Buchanan  
G.K. Butterfield  
Shelley Moore Capito  
Lois Capps  
Chris Carney  
Steve Cohen  
Joe Courtney  
Keith Ellison  
John Hall  
Chris Van Hollen  
Darlene Hooley  
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Patrick Kennedy

James Langevin  
Ron Lewis  
Dave Loebsack  
Carolyn Maloney  
Ed Markey  
Doris Matsui  
Carolyn McCarthy  
Betty McCollum  
Jerry McNerney  
Brad Miller  
Jerrold Nadler  
James Oberstar  
Jon Porter  
David Price  
Laura Richardson  
Mike Ross  
Heath Shuler  
Mike Thompson  
John Yarmuth  
Don Young

An excerpt from the Walz-Shays letter, sent to Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Boehner, is as follows:

*“In recent months, the Administration sent to Congress proposals to enact deep cuts in Medicare spending for skilled nursing care. One proposal would eliminate Medicare’s annual inflation adjustment for SNFs, cutting nearly \$1 billion in 2009 alone. In addition, the Administration is proposing regulations that would cut another \$4.7 billion in Medicare funding for skilled nursing home care by 2013. Combined, these proposals would cut Medicare skilled nursing care by nearly \$19 per patient per day next year.*

*“We are deeply concerned about the impact that cuts of this magnitude would have on America’s most vulnerable seniors and the workers who care for them. At a time when Congress is working to stimulate economic activity and jobs growth, these Medicare cuts would jeopardize direct care jobs – 86% of which are held by women whose salaries are modest and whose families depend on receiving annual cost of living increases. We feel strongly that that these dedicated direct care workers are a key reason we have seen meaningful quality improvement in skilled nursing care in recent years.*

*“Nursing homes already operate on razor thin margins, the lowest of any health care provider group. Without stable Medicare payments, many SNFs will lack the resources they need to continue to invest in the building facilities and health information technology necessary to providing the highest quality of care.”*

Cantrell noted that in providing around the clock care and services to patients, nursing homes rely upon the annual Medicare cost of living update – now possibly targeted for elimination – to meet rising costs. Seventy percent of these costs are related to staffing. This crucial Medicare update, which the Coalition is lobbying to protect, allows for annual cost of living increases for staff, increases a facility’s ability to enhance staffing, and provides the vital resources needed to improve and refurbish facilities with modern equipment and technology.

“We will be monitoring lawmakers’ votes and actions carefully in regard to Medicare cuts – and we will ensure local seniors are well aware of their lawmakers’ record in this regard. Both nursing home care quality and the jobs of the key caregivers who make a difference in patient outcomes are on the line,” Cantrell continued.

The Coalition to Protect Senior Care consists of the American Association for Long Term Care Nursing (AALTCN); the American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA); the American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordinators (AANAC); the National Rural Health Association (NRHA); the American Association of Nurse Executives (AANEX); the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA); the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA); the American Society of Health Care Administration Executives (ASHCAE); ASHCAE state affiliate members representing Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas and Utah; the American Health Care Association (AHCA); the American Health Quality Association (AHQA); the National Association for the Support of Long Term Care (NASL); the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA); the Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care; the Coalition of Women in Long Term Care (COWL); and the Senior Clinician Group. For more information, visit [www.coalitiontoprotectseniorcare.org](http://www.coalitiontoprotectseniorcare.org).