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## **Nation's Front Line Caregivers Say New CMS Rule Undermines Care Needs of America's Oldest, Sickest Seniors**

*\$5 Billion Medicare Cut Undercuts Developing Clinical Infrastructure Needed to Maximize Facility Care Quality*

**Joplin, MO (May 5, 2008)** – The Coalition to Protect Senior Care (CPSC) today expressed its strong opposition to a newly-issued rule promulgated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) which, by regulatory means, will cut Medicare-financed nursing home funding by \$5 billion over five years. This funding cut, the frontline caregiver group warns, will undermine the growing complex care needs of America's oldest, sickest nursing home patients, and undercut ongoing improvements in the clinical infrastructure already underway now benefitting patients.

"The new CMS directive is frustrating to America's front line caregivers because its net impact will be to reverse a federal policy that is currently benefitting elderly patients," said Lisa Cantrell, a co-founder of the National Association of Health Care Assistants, and a national spokesperson for the Coalition to Protect Senior Care.

"It is frustrating to stand by and be forced to watch health policy in Washington change course in mid-stream – especially when the policy that is supposedly being 'fixed' is, in fact, working," she continued. "We urge CMS to reconsider and reverse this new policy, and we will be encouraging Congress to voice rightful, strong dissent."

Cantrell said that as the nature of America's skilled nursing facility (SNF) patient population continues to evolve due to demographic and policy changes, the federal government's role should be to help facilities' direct care staff treat the high-acuity individuals increasingly seen in facilities nationwide. Moreover, Cantrell warned, the direct care staff that help make the key difference in quality outcomes will also be harmed by the CMS action.

"These funding cuts will further put at risk a facility's ability to sustain caregiver wage and benefit packages that are already on the margin of being uncompetitive with other service-oriented professions," Cantrell warned. "This is bad policy from CMS, and it is in need of swift correction based on simple common sense and what is best for patients and caregivers."

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 Assessment Coordinators (AANAC); the American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA); 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; and the Senior Clinician Group.

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