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Coalition to Protect Senior Care Urges Obama Administration to Support Frontline Caregivers by Protecting Medicare Funding in FY 2010 Budget Blueprint

Nation's Nursing Home Caregivers Urge Pursuit of Consistent, Logical Policy in Regard to Boosting LTC Jobs, Protecting Seniors' Care Quality

Joplin, MO – A national coalition of front line caregivers today urged the Obama Administration to build upon its success in the federal economic stimulus bill by protecting Medicare funding for skilled nursing care in the soon-to-be released fiscal 2010 budget proposal. The caregiver coalition warned that any Medicare cutbacks would undercut efforts to create new long term care jobs, and might even result in job loss.

“All of the potential good from the stimulus bill in regard to strengthening America’s long term care workforce with new jobs would be quickly whipsawed by any federal Medicare cuts – which would force facilities to reduce staff,” warned Lori Porter, a senior leader of the Coalition to Protect Senior Care (CPSC), and a co-founder of the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA).

“From a policy perspective, it would be illogical to encourage job creation through the stimulus law on one hand while, on the other, placing enormous pressure on providers to cut jobs by enacting federal Medicare cuts,” she continued. “The bottom line: maintaining Medicaid funding for skilled nursing care must be a top Administration health care priority if frontline caregivers are to be able to ensure quality caregiving at the bedside.”

Porter said front line direct care workers in skilled nursing facilities are already challenged with staffing shortages – 110,000 nationwide. Skilled nursing facilities, particularly in rural communities, she observed, are often the largest local employer. “Filling these vital long term care positions can be a key component to jump starting local economies, and preserving the quality care we provide every day to Medicare beneficiaries. But stable Medicare funding is necessary to filling these job vacancies.” She said that approximately three out of every four patients in nursing facilities are paid for by Medicare and Medicaid. She also noted a 2008 study of the nation’s Medicaid system by Eljay, LLC found state Medicaid programs cumulatively under fund the actual cost of providing quality nursing home care by \$4.2 billion, a primary cause of the underlying instability in the nation’s long term care workforce.

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); 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 Nurse Executive Council.

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