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**Coalition to Protect Senior Care Applauds Senate Finance Health Subcommittee Hearing on Long Term Care Improvement as Part of Broad Health Care Reform**

**Joplin, MO (March 26, 2009)** – The Coalition to Protect Senior Care – a national coalition of frontline clinicians and caregiver groups providing quality skilled nursing care – commended the Senate Finance Health Subcommittee for raising visibility on the need to include long term care in any comprehensive health care reform plan through yesterday’s Subcommittee hearing, “The Role of Long Term Care in Health Reform.”

“Speaking on behalf of the caregivers who provide dedicated, round-the-clock care in our nation’s skilled nursing facilities, we applaud the efforts of Chairman Rockefeller and Ranking Member Hatch for recognizing the important role long term care plays in caring for the nation’s elderly, and we look forward to working closely with Subcommittee members to enact health care reforms that address the growing long term care needs of Americans,” said Lori Porter, co-founder of the National Association of Health Care Assistants and the Coalition to Protect Senior Care. “As America’s senior population continues to grow and require a greater degree of complex care services, it is clear that any lasting approach to reforming healthcare must keep eldercare needs – including adequate staffing and funding for specialized services – in mind.”

The hearing, led by Senate Finance Health Subcommittee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) and Ranking Member Orrin Hatch (R-UT), included testimony from Judy Feder, PhD., Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Raymond C. Scheppach, PhD., Executive Director, National Governors Association; Dennis G. Smith, Senior Research Fellow in Health Care Reform, The Heritage Foundation and Joshua M. Wiener, PhD., Senior Fellow, RTI International on the rationale for including long term care improvement in any broad-based health reform plan and plans for the long term care profession to outline reform recommendations to Congress.

Porter pointed to the need to stimulate jobs growth in the long term care sector in order to improve patient care and help stimulate economic recovery efforts, noting that direct care workers in skilled nursing facilities are already challenged with staffing shortages – 110,000 nationwide – and that these facilities, particularly in rural communities, are often the largest local employer in a community.

“We appreciate the importance of this subcommittee hearing focusing on long term care reform needs, and the promise it holds for developing long term care improvements in future plans,” added Porter. “We hope that policymakers will join us in making quality care for seniors a priority, by supporting reforms that maintain adequate funding and fill vital long term care positions.”

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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