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National Front Line Caregiver Coalition Urges Swift Passage of Economic Stimulus Bill to Help Protect Seniors, Boost LTC Workforce, Strengthen U.S. Economy

Urges Sen. Daschle to Ensure Long Term Care Included in Broader 2009 Health Reform Package

Joplin, MO – Saying the care of America’s seniors and the strength of the national long-term care workforce are at stake in the ongoing debate surrounding a final economic stimulus package, the Coalition to Protect Senior Care today said the long term care sector is a significant contributor to the economic health of communities nationwide, and its stability is vital to stimulate needed economic growth and new jobs.

“Our message to the incoming Obama Administration and Capitol Hill lawmakers is that passing an economic stimulus package that includes a robust Medicaid component is a very wise investment due to the fact seniors’ care will be protected, long term care jobs will be created, and the nation’s economy strengthened,” stated Lori Porter, co-founder of the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA), and a senior spokesperson for the Coalition to Protect Senior Care.

Noting that long term care accounts for 1.1% of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) -- \$144 billion annually – Porter said the long term care workforce is an integral part of the local economic base in urban, suburban and rural communities alike. “Our lawmakers in Washington are being responsible in their effort to evaluate the wisest ways in which to invest taxpayer dollars, and any objective analysis will show that long term care job creation offers not just enormous benefits to local economies, but also protecting the growing care needs of a rapidly aging population in need of ever more care and services.”

But even with 2.9 million long term care employees, she observed, the sector still faces a critical workforce shortage as more than 110,000 direct care staff positions remain vacant and ready for new hires. “Recruiting and retaining well-qualified staff is a challenge even in the best of economic times, and investing federal dollars now will go a considerable way towards improving the long term quality of life for our seniors and the longer term economic stability of our local and state economies.”

Porter also said it is essential for federal and state lawmakers to better-understand the highly negative implications associated with the cross-subsidization of Medicaid by Medicare. According to Eljay, LLC, there exists a \$4.2 billion differential between what the states cumulatively fund for Medicaid versus the actual costs incurred by providers. With our Governors wrestling with enormous pressure on their state Medicaid budgets, she said, the last thing seniors and frontline caregivers can afford is federal Medicare cuts like those proposed last week by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). “The MedPAC

recommendation and the logic behind it was conceived in a manner oblivious to the real-world situation faced nationwide by seniors, caregivers and citizens who want jobs.”

Porter also praised president-elect Obama’s selection of former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) to spearhead health care reform efforts, and said Senator Daschle’s expertise in health care and the fair, judicious manner in which he conducts himself will benefit the content of any reform package as well as the process in developing it. “With the demand for long term care services expected to more than double by 2040, and with an increasingly irrational, ineffective funding policy, long term care is in need of broad-based reform, and we respectfully urge Sen. Daschle to ensure it is part of any overall reform bill.”

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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 Senior Clinician Group.