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As President Obama Concludes Midwest Bus Tour, Coalition to Protect Senior Care Says Medicare, Medicaid Cuts Would Weaken Rural Seniors' Care Access, Cost Rural Jobs

Frontline Illinois Caregiver to Nation's Leaders: Seniors' Nursing Home Care Cannot Take More Cuts

Alpha, IL – As President Barack Obama concludes his three-day Midwest bus tour with a town hall meeting in Alpha, IL this afternoon, the Coalition to Protect Senior Care said rural seniors' ongoing access to quality nursing home care and the strength of rural Illinois' jobs and economic base is directly related to adequate Medicare and Medicaid funding in the face of imminent budget threats from Washington, D.C.

"More cuts to Medicare and Medicaid from the newly-empowered Congressional 'Super Committee' will negatively affect rural seniors' future ability to access quality nursing home care, and will undoubtedly undermine America's rural jobs base since Medicare and Medicaid are more than just vital health programs, but also key rural economic drivers," said Lisa Cantrell, a national spokesman for the Coalition to Protect Senior Care, and President of the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA). Cantrell noted that deep cuts to Medicare occurred as part of the health reform bill, and that state Medicaid budgets nationwide are being significantly squeezed by the weak national economy.

Emphasizing the fragility of Illinois' Medicaid program, Theresa Forshey, a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) and Restorative Aide (RA) for the Barry Community Care Center in Barry, Illinois, said the differential between the actual cost of providing quality care and what Medicaid actually reimburses Illinois facilities is \$21.95 per patient day, according to a recent *Eljay* study released by the American Health Care Association (AHCA). "With 70 percent of our facility's budget directly related to staffing, yet more cuts to Medicare and Medicaid like

those being openly discussed in Washington will have a direct impact on our continued ability to deliver high quality care,” cautioned Forshey.

“While quality nursing home patient care is at stake in the broad national discussion, jobs and the very well-being of our frontline caregiver community are also at stake,” Forshey continued. Second only to hospitals as the state and nation’s largest health facility employer, Illinois’ skilled nursing and rehab facilities generate a substantial \$10.72 billion in state economic activity annually, help create 120,991 local jobs, and directly employ 79,458 workers. Nursing homes throughout the state are a major local employer of key frontline care staff (*Data Source: Avalere Health*)

Forshey said strong Medicaid and Medicare funding are needed to maintain ongoing quality improvement programs now benefitting Illinois seniors. “Front line care is a 24/7/365 effort and we have a total commitment to our patients, who are like family members. Our most vulnerable frail, elderly and disabled patients deserve the best care, and we will do whatever we can do to help ensure this is always the case. We respectfully urge President Obama and Congress to do the same.”

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Among the Coalition to Protect Senior Care membership are: American Association for Long Term Care Nursing (AALTCN) • Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care • American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA) • American Health Care Association (AHCA) • American Health Quality Association (AHQA) • American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) • American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) • American Society of Health Care Administration Executives (ASHCAE) • Coalition of Women in Long Term Care (COWL) • National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA) • National Association for the Support of Long Term Care (NASL) • National Rural Health Association • Senior Clinician Group.