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NEWS

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PHCA, PANPHA: BUSH, RENDELL BUDGETS DELIVER ‘DOUBLE WHAMMY’ TO STATE’S ELDERLY RESIDENTS

Cuts in state and federal proposed budgets could impact access to care, quality of life for Pennsylvania seniors in nursing homes

HARRISBURG --- Two statewide advocacy associations for Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable seniors and their providers of care today expressed appreciation to U.S. Sen. Robert Casey Jr. and U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz for their support of the state’s most vulnerable residents, especially the frail elderly and other needy older Pennsylvanians.

The senator and congresswoman held a telephone news conference this afternoon to discuss the substantial impact that President George W. Bush’s proposed budget could have on Pennsylvania families, communities and businesses.

Pennsylvania Health Care Association President and CEO, Dr. Stuart Shapiro, said Pennsylvania seniors are particularly at risk because of funding cuts outlined earlier this week by Governor Edward G. Rendell in his state budget, as well as cuts proposed late last week by President Bush.

“I am shocked and saddened that the president is attempting to balance the budget on the backs of the frail and elderly of America,” Dr. Shapiro said. “But the budget proposed by Governor Rendell this week delivers yet another punch to Pennsylvania seniors by refusing to fund the cost of care for Medicaid residents in nursing homes.”

Ron Barth, President and CEO of PANPHA, further stated, "Both the Rendell administration and the Bush administration have willingly abandoned their obligation to cover Medicaid costs. All Americans should be outraged at how our most frail elderly are being forgotten by their government leaders. Government seems to think that it can pay less than the cost of the services it demands and providers will magically find ways to care for individuals without money. Every time government reduces funding below the cost of services, someone has to pay more. Those ‘someones’ are residents and/or nursing home employees who must forego wage increases or benefits. We thank Sen. Casey and Congresswoman Schwartz for their support in Washington, and call on them to also use their influence with the Rendell administration to correct this terrible injustice."

Both leaders also called upon U.S. Senator Arlen Specter to continue his longstanding advocacy on behalf of elderly constituents and oppose the President’s Medicaid and Medicare budget cuts.

President Bush's proposed 3.1 trillion dollar Fiscal Year 2009 budget includes significant cuts to federal programs, such as Medicare, that disproportionately affect Pennsylvania. The Governor's budget has no increase in funding for the care of Pennsylvania's most ill and elderly residents in nursing homes, jeopardizing their quality of life and threatening the viability of Pennsylvania's long-term care system.

PHCA members comprise for-profit and nonprofit providers. Overall, PHCA, along with its sister agency, the Center for Assisted Living Management (CALM), represents more than 300 long-term care and senior service providers that care for almost 33,500 elderly and disabled individuals across the state.

PANPHA represents more than 360 non-profit long-term-care nursing facilities, personal care homes, housing providers and continuing care retirement communities, serving more than 65,000 older Pennsylvanians daily, employing over 45,000 caregivers, and utilizing 150,000 volunteers, trustees, and auxiliary members. For more information about PANPHA, visit www.panpha.org.

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