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NEWS

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PHCA to General Assembly, Governor: Follow President Bush Lead On Need to Pass Real Medical Malpractice Reform

*Reform Efforts in DC Must be Complemented by Reform Efforts in Harrisburg
President's State of the Union Remarks about Passing Reforms that Help Patients Applauded*

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) today urged the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor Edward G. Rendell to follow the lead of President Bush by working in 2004 to pass real medical malpractice reform that, the group says, includes a state constitutional amendment capping jury awards on non economic damages.

“We are encouraged that, once again, President Bush spotlighted in his State of the Union address the need to pass medical malpractice reforms that put patients first,” said Alan G. Rosenbloom, President and CEO of PHCA. “We applaud the President for his persistence on this key health care initiative, and we hope the U.S. Congress, the Pennsylvania General Assembly and the Governor demonstrate similar vigor in their pursuit of reform.”

Continued Rosenbloom, “We are cognizant and appreciative of past efforts by the General Assembly and Governor Rendell to bring about the reforms necessary to protect seniors’ access to quality care, but this will only occur if we take the big, necessary step of passing an amendment to the state constitution capping jury awards on non-economic damages. Until this occurs, there will not be real reform that makes a difference in the lives of patients.”

The PHCA President and CEO noted that, as with doctors and hospitals, long term care providers throughout the Commonwealth face a crisis in both the availability and affordability of professional liability insurance. But unlike doctors and hospitals, however, the relatively modest loss experience of long term care providers does not warrant the dramatic increases in insurance costs: 250% increases in primary rates from 1996 to 2000; annual increases in primary rates of as much as 500% in 2001, 2002 and 2003; and, CAT Fund/MCare Fund assessment increases of 100% or more in many regions of the Commonwealth in 2002 and 2003.

With the second highest senior population in the nation, Rosenbloom said Pennsylvania will continue to be among the states most adversely impacted by the growing malpractice crisis unless it is finally resolved via the constitutional amendment process.

“There are some in Pennsylvania hoping the malpractice reform issue ‘will just go away’ and be a temporary blip on the public policy radar screen – but that’s not going to happen,” Rosenbloom concluded.

PHCA is a statewide membership services organization representing more than 325 long-term care and senior service providers throughout the Commonwealth. Additional information about PHCA is available by calling 717-221-1800 or visiting www.phca.org.

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