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NEWS

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New Poll: PA Voters Voice Overwhelming Support for More Uniform Training, Education, Background Check Standards for Health Workers *PHCA Praises Dowd-Eisenhower's Aging Plan Town Meeting in State College Area*

Pleasant Gap, PA – Stating Pennsylvanians are benefiting from the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's statewide hearings to discuss the Department's new four year plan, the Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) today said a new statewide poll demonstrates overwhelming public support to ensure home health care workers in the Commonwealth receive the same rigorous training, education and background check standards now required by law for nursing home employees.

"Aging Secretary Nora Dowd-Eisenhower is doing a superb job seeking as much public input as possible before finalizing the Department's four year blueprint on seniors' future needs," stated Alan G. Rosenbloom, President and CEO of PHCA. "The more seniors in the State College area know regarding their future long term care options and the programs underway, the better off we will all be."

Rosenbloom said a much-needed public policy discussion about the merits as well as possible drawbacks regarding expansion of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) is an important part of the ongoing public dialogue, and that it is vital for the public and policymakers to evaluate the program in an objective manner.

He noted a new poll of 650 likely Pennsylvania voters conducted by Susquehanna Polling Research finds:

- 89% say the state should require the same training and education requirements for home care workers as it does for nursing home employees.
- 94% support legislation ensuring home health workers undergo the same criminal background check now applied to nursing home employees.

"Consumers clearly demand and deserve a more uniform, level playing field when it comes to ensuring the caregivers they depend upon are trained, educated and checked in a manner that maximizes care quality and safety," stated Rosenbloom. "A key public policy objective in the Commonwealth must be to establish a more integrated long term care continuum -- from home and community-based care to assisted living to nursing facilities."

He indicated PHCA supports the Administration's intent to 'rebalance' the long term care system in Pennsylvania by expanding HCBS, and will continue to support its appropriate expansion as a complement to facility-based care. "But we strongly oppose – and so does the public -- exempting these caregivers and providers from the licensing oversight we now have with nursing homes and their employees."

Concluded Rosenbloom: "Providing seniors with more choices and options must always be government's objective when it comes to delivering health care services. Providing consumers with the options associated with HCBS settings is good public policy -- yet expansion of these efforts must be cost effective, and, most important, guarantee quality care. We look forward to working with all concerned to continue an intelligent debate on this and other important seniors' health issues."

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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