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NEWS

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**PHCA Joins Congressman Gerlach, Norristown Caregivers to Urge
Immediate Release of \$344 Million for PA Nursing Home Care**

Care Quality of Commonwealth's Most Vulnerable Frail, Elderly, Disabled Jeopardized by Federal Inaction

Norristown, PA – The Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) today joined Congressman Jim Gerlach and Norristown area caregivers at the Rittenhouse Pine Center to urge the federal government to release \$344 million in supplemental Medicaid funding to ensure Pennsylvania's most vulnerable population of frail, elderly and disabled continue to receive quality long term care.

“Nursing home residents throughout the Commonwealth are in immediate jeopardy because Washington is not moving quickly enough to release these essential Medicaid funds,” warned Alan G. Rosenbloom, President and CEO of PHCA. “We appreciate once again today's show of support from Congressman Gerlach -- who clearly understands the funding delay from Washington is having enormously negative repercussions here in Pennsylvania. We appreciate the fact Jim Gerlach is working with Senator Specter and our congressional delegation to ensure the funding necessary to maintain and improve care quality is released.”

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) is responsible for disbursing the \$344 million in question, and is in the process of reviewing state applications for supplemental Medicaid funds intended to protect seniors' access to benefits and services, and to weather state budgetary crises nationwide.

PHCA, the Service Employees International Union and other advocacy organizations have warned for months that failure by CMS to approve and release these funds on a timely basis could precipitate draconian Medical Assistance benefit cuts, severe staff reductions, care access problems and even the possibility of facility closures. Rosenbloom said the funds are needed immediately “to ensure caregivers throughout the Commonwealth can provide high quality nursing home care, and to help ensure facilities have the staff and resources necessary to do so.”

Rittenhouse Pine Center is operated by Genesis Healthcare, a leading national provider of quality healthcare services for the elderly. The PHCA President and CEO observed that because staffing has a direct impact on quality, the failure of the federal government to promptly release these resources will undermine the substantive efforts being made by Genesis and other providers to improve care quality in Pennsylvania's nursing homes.

Rosenbloom also warned the Medicaid funding crisis is symptomatic of a larger problem: failure on the part of the federal government to foster a more stable funding environment conducive to maximizing quality improvement initiatives. “Medicare is also in a perilous state, and it is incumbent upon our federal lawmakers to ensure it is not further weakened in 2005 by unwise, unwarranted changes in its funding provisions.”

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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