



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2004

NEWS

Contact: Holly Lubart

(717) 221-7935

PHCA: Pending SEPTA Plan Could Be Disastrous for Area Seniors, Caregivers

Harrisburg, PA – Warning that the reported plan to completely eliminate SEPTA service on weekends, reduce weekday service by 20%, and raising rates could have a disastrous impact on seniors and caregivers throughout the vast SEPTA service area, the Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) urged those involved in negotiations to avoid what amounts to a draconian proposal.

“While we certainly appreciate the financial challenges facing SEPTA, we nonetheless must note the potentially disastrous consequences of the contingency plan the press has reported is pending,” said Alan G. Rosenbloom, President and CEO of PHCA. “A substantial number of direct care workers throughout the Philadelphia area working at long term care facilities rely on SEPTA as their sole means of transportation. Nursing homes, assisted living residences and personal care homes -- like hospitals -- cannot simply close operations on ‘off hours’ or weekends.”

Observing that resident care is a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week responsibility, Rosenbloom said that if direct care workers cannot reach these facilities, thousands of frail, elderly and vulnerable people will not receive the care and services they require.

In the greater Philadelphia area, there are 193 nursing homes and 331 personal care homes. The Philadelphia area nursing homes alone employ more than 34,000 people -- the majority of whom are direct care workers responsible for the care and services of approximately 25,000 Pennsylvania seniors.

Rosenbloom noted that at one facility in Chester County, for example, more than 95 percent of the direct care staff uses SEPTA to commute to work. If SEPTA service was terminated on the weekends, there would be virtually no direct care workers at the facility. Similar examples abound throughout the five-county region and within Philadelphia County itself.

“SEPTA’s proposal could also have a significant economic impact on direct care workers, who are the backbone of the long term care delivery system in Pennsylvania,” the PHCA President and CEO continued. “When faced with the loss of income due to the inability to get to work, many of these workers could be forced to seek other employment. In the short term, they will bear significant financial pain. In the long term, the already narrow pool of direct care workers will shrink even further, making it harder and more expensive for facilities to recruit and retain qualified workers. Ultimately, of course, it will be the residents in need of care and services who will suffer.”

PHCA is a statewide membership services organization representing approximately 300 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.

#####