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PENNSYLVANIANS FOR QUALITY CARE ASKS GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO CONTINUE FIGHT FOR FAIR FUNDING OF FRAIL ELDERLY

HARRISBURG (June 26, 2008) – As negotiations for the 2008-09 state budget progress, Pennsylvanians for Quality Care (PFQC) today asked state lawmakers to continue to fight for increased funding for the care of medical assistance nursing home residents

Two out of three nursing home residents in Pennsylvania are on medical assistance. With the commonwealth underfunding nursing homes by nearly \$290 million over the past three years, many nursing homes in Pennsylvania are at a breaking point. Facilities are struggling to meet the medical, physical and social needs of residents. In some places in Pennsylvania, as a result of chronic government underfunding, low-income elderly have to wait for nursing home beds and self-paying nursing home residents have to pay more for their care.

“As one of the oldest states in the nation, PA needs to expand the entire spectrum of aging services. However, the vast majority of Pennsylvania’s most frail elderly who rely on nursing home care cannot be safely cared for elsewhere,” said Ron Barth, president and CEO of PANPHA. “It’s time to look past the rhetoric and see this issue for what it really is: providing the best possible care for our loved ones who are currently receiving care in Pennsylvania’s nursing homes. Fair funding is necessary to achieve this, and our frail elderly deserve nothing less.”

Dr. Stuart Shapiro, president and CEO of the PA Health Care Association, said data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency that administers both programs, clearly shows that Pennsylvania nursing home residents are older and sicker than the national average, including Florida – demographically the oldest state.

“Pennsylvania nursing homes provide more registered nursing hours than the vast majority of states. Despite this, our Medicaid rates are still below those of most of our neighboring states,” Shapiro said. “Nursing homes have been doing so much more for less, but that can only continue for so long. Their resources aren’t endless.”

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Mike Wilt, Executive Director of the PA Association of County Affiliated Homes, called on legislators to add much needed funding to the medical assistance budget proposal for nursing home residents.

“For three years, the commonwealth has not fulfilled its responsibility to pay for the care of these residents, leaving nursing homes with \$290 million in unpaid bills,” Wilt said. “Ultimately, it is the elderly residents who pay the price for chronic government underfunding because when nursing homes must devote all resources to providing essential health care, they have no choice but to trim the programs and activities that residents enjoy and that make life inside a nursing home much more like life at home.”

PFQC is a coalition is comprised of care administrators; employees; residents and family members, as well as PANPHA, an association of nonprofit senior services; the PA Association of County Affiliated Homes (PACAH); and the PA Health Care Association (PHCA). For more information about PFQC and the impact of flat funding on Pennsylvania’s nursing home residents, visit www.PaForQualityCare.org.

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