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NEWS

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PHCA HIGHLIGHTS STATE BUDGET EFFECTS ON NURSING HOMES, ELDER CARE

PHCA President & CEO to appear on 'Pennsylvania Newsmakers' to talk about the effect of the Rendell administration's 2008-09 budget proposal, which flat-lines funding for the care nursing home residents on medical assistance

HARRISBURG --- With only a few days remaining before the June 30 deadline for the General Assembly to pass a new budget, a coalition of nursing home caregivers, facility residents and their families wants Pennsylvania to provide the state-required funding necessary to ensure that the commonwealth's poorest, frail elderly and disabled get the high level of care they deserve.

Over the past three years, the state has underfunded nursing homes by nearly \$290 million. The Rendell administration's 2008-09 budget proposal flat-lines funding for the care of nursing home residents on medical assistance.

Pennsylvanians for Quality Care (PFQC), formed earlier this year by care providers, administrators, employees, residents and family members, is seeking \$69 million to pay cost-of-living increases and cover the rising cost of care for residents with higher acuity (or "sickness") rates. **That \$69 million state allocation would be matched by an additional \$83 million in federal dollars.**

"The administration's budget plan weakens our long-term care infrastructure at a time when our population is growing older faster, the costs for care are rising, and Pennsylvania's nursing home residents are sicker and in need of more intensive care," said Dr. Stuart Shapiro, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA).

Dr. Shapiro will appear on a statewide public affairs program this weekend to discuss nursing home funding.

Statewide, 65 percent of the 80,000 Pennsylvanians who rely on nursing homes for their daily living needs receive medical assistance. State regulations require the commonwealth to cover the care of these individuals, often the sickest and neediest among us. But that's not happening.

Because government has not fulfilled its obligation to pay for their care, nursing homes on average lose \$12 per resident per day, or more than \$4,300 per resident per year.

Many nursing homes in Pennsylvania are nearing a breaking point. Facilities are struggling to meet the medical, physical and social needs of residents. In some places in Pennsylvania, low-income

elderly have to wait for nursing home beds and self-paying nursing home residents have to pay more for their care, because of chronic government underfunding.

“One of the most difficult decisions any family will make is whether to move an ailing, elderly loved one to a nursing home,” Dr. Shapiro said.

“All of us prefer to age at home, but when someone we love is too sick or too frail to be safely cared for at home, we are fortunate that Pennsylvania has excellent nursing homes with dedicated caregivers who provide compassionate, around-the-clock care,” he said.

Dr. Shapiro pointed to a national report issued earlier this month by My Inner View that looks at resident and family satisfaction of nursing homes, including those in Pennsylvania.

In that study, 88 percent of the resident respondents gave an overall satisfaction rating of either “excellent” or “good,” and 86 percent rated as “excellent” or “good” their willingness to recommend the facility to others. Eighty-two percent of family survey respondents gave an overall rating of “excellent” or “good,” with 80 percent indicating a strong willingness to recommend to others the facility where their loved one was receiving care and services.

“For many of our elderly, services at home can be safely and cost effectively delivered,” Dr. Shapiro said. “For others, a nursing home is the appropriate setting for safe and cost-effective care --- and often the right decision for families, as difficult as it may be to decide.”

Dr. Shapiro will discuss the issue this weekend on “Pennsylvania Newsmakers,” with host Dr. G. Terry Madonna. “Pennsylvania Newsmakers” is the state’s premier politics and public policy talk television show. The show will air regionally as indicated below:

- WGAL Channel 8 (Harrisburg and Lancaster) at 11 a.m. Sunday, June 29 and 1:30 a.m. Monday, June 30.
- WBPH (Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia) at 8:30 p.m. Monday, June 30.
- WKBS 47 (Altoona) at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, June 28.
- WPCB 40 (Pittsburgh) at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, June 28.
- CATV Channel 8 at 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 1 and 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 2.

PHCA is a statewide advocacy organization for Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable older residents and their providers of care. Members comprise for-profit, nonprofit and government providers. PHCA, along with its sister agency, the Center for Assisted Living Management, represents more than 310 long-term care and senior service providers that care for almost 33,500 elderly and disabled individuals.

Earlier this year, PHCA joined the Pennsylvanians for Quality Care, which was formed by care providers, residents and family members to fight the administration’s proposed 2008-09 state budget. The coalition comprises care administrators; employees; residents and family members, as well as PANPHA, an association of nonprofit senior services; the Pennsylvania Association of County Affiliated Homes (PACAH).

The coalition recently unveiled more than 300 proclamations, signed by over 31,000 care providers, residents and family members, urging elected officials to reject the governor’s proposed budget.

For more information about the coalition, visit www.PaForQualityCare.org. For more information about PHCA, call 717-221-1800 or visit www.phca.org.