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**Pomeroy, Berkley, Capito, Brown-Waite Urge Obama Administration to Protect Seniors' Care**

*AHCA/Alliance Praise New Bipartisan Letter Asking White House to 'Protect the Safety Net'*

**Washington, DC** – The nation's two leading long-term care advocacy organizations, the American Health Care Association (AHCA) and the Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care, today praised and thanked U.S. Representatives Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL) for sending a new letter to President Barack Obama urging the Administration to protect seniors' vital Medicare and Medicaid funding as the FY 2010 budget process unfolds.

In a joint statement, Bruce Yarwood, President and CEO of AHCA, and Alan G. Rosenbloom, President of the Alliance, stated, "We commend this bipartisan effort to ensure the growing care needs of our nation's most vulnerable frail, elderly and disabled are protected, and thank Representatives Pomeroy, Berkley, Capito and Brown-Waite for pointing out the growing and dangerous interdependence between Medicare and Medicaid financing. As funding stability is the key determinant when it comes to preserving care access and sustaining quality gains, we look forward to working constructively with the Administration and Congress to ensure every U.S. senior always retains ready access to the quality nursing home care they need and deserve."

The bipartisan letter states:

*We are writing to respectfully ask that in drafting your Fiscal Year 2010 (FY 2010) Budget, you do not propose Medicaid and Medicare payment policy recommendations that will adversely affect long term care delivery. While we recognize the importance of ensuring the future solvency of these programs, we ask that you also ensure that the best interest of our nation's frail elderly and the disabled served by skilled nursing facilities (SNF) are kept in mind.*

*Approximately 80 percent of nursing home patients rely on Medicare or Medicaid to pay for their long-term care. Given that the fastest growing segment of our population is those 85 and older, our nation's need for long-term care will continue to increase significantly. Providing appropriate funding for Medicare and Medicaid will ensure that this ever-increasing population will have access to needed long term care when the time arrives.*

*Unfortunately, the Medicaid reimbursement for care at a skilled nursing facility (SNF) has long been inadequate. This funding shortfall has been calculated at \$4.2 billion nationwide in 2008, or to put it another way, a loss of \$12.48 per patient, per day. Medicare reimbursement supplements this perpetual underfunding and until the Medicaid shortfall can be addressed we ask that you consider the interdependence of these programs when finalizing your FY 2010 budget proposal.*

*The long-term care sector has experienced relative economic stability in the face of the current recession, and has increased employment by 37,600 in 2008 alone to meet the demands of a growing aging population. However, a recent study conducted by the American Health Care Association (AHCA) estimated that nearly 110,000 health care personnel full-time equivalents (FTE) are needed nationwide to fill vacant nursing positions. Labor represents 70 percent of a facility's costs and federal payment reductions considered in a vacuum could compromise the ability of long term care providers to supply life-sustaining services to frail, elderly and disabled residents. In addition, any resulting workforce reductions will decrease the economic impact of the country's long-term care facilities, which last year contributed \$153.8 billion or 1.1 percent of GDP.*

*We respectfully request that you and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) do everything you can to foster the stability of the long-term care community. Your leadership is needed not only to sustain the continued provision of safe, high quality care, but also to better meet the needs of patients who are experiencing more medically complex conditions than ever before. Thank you in advance for considering our request. We look forward to working with you in facing these challenges to protect the safety net that our nation's seniors deserve.*

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