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AHCA Contact: Susan Feeney (202) 716-1110
Alliance Contact: Debra DeShong Reed (202) 528-4214

Baucus Approach to Financing Health Care Reform Step in Right Direction
Stable Medicare Financing Essential for Continued Quality Gains Evidenced in New Nursing Home Quality Report

Washington, DC – The American Health Care Association (AHCA) and Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care (Alliance) characterized the health care finance reform plan released by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus as a step in the right direction, and said the process moving forward to a final bill should avoid steep cuts to Medicare financed nursing home care for the benefit of U.S. seniors, the overall stability of the nation’s vital long term care sector, and the ongoing success of quality improvement initiatives.

“The health plan advanced by Senator Baucus is a step in the right direction in terms of protecting hard-fought quality gains now benefitting patients, and we believe this general approach should shape a final bill,” said Bruce Yarwood, President and CEO of AHCA. Said Alan Rosenbloom, President of the Alliance: “Senator Baucus has moved the process forward in a positive manner, and demonstrates the necessary recognition that Medicare funding for our sector simply cannot be viewed in isolation from Medicaid.”

The long term care leaders said they are encouraged to be making progress on Capitol Hill and at the local level in explaining that 70 percent of facility operating expenses go directly to wages, benefits and other labor costs. Medicare funding stability from Washington equates to staffing stability locally, and to the ongoing, successful operation of the sector’s quality improvement programs, which they showcased through the release of a comprehensive, objective Quality Report.

In releasing the sector’s first comprehensive report detailing quality trends in the nation’s nursing homes, the AHCA and Alliance leaders noted that AHCA and the Alliance took Congress’ focus on “transparency” one step further by engaging experts in quality and nursing facility care to critically assess data and trends to provide a unbiased, objective view of what has happened with quality in nursing homes since we began *Quality First* initiative in 2002.”

Yarwood and Rosenbloom said the quality report and its findings are highly relevant to the ongoing health care reform debate, and noted they intend to raise its visibility in ongoing discussions with lawmakers and their staffs.

The Quality Report is available in its totality at www.ahca.org and www.aqnhc.org

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