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*Changing the Culture of Long Term Care Nursing
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National Front Line Caregiver Coalition Urges Supports Economic Stimulus Bill

Saying the care of America's seniors and the strength of the national long-term care workforce are at stake in the ongoing debate surrounding a final economic stimulus package, the Coalition to Protect Senior Care, of which AALTCN is a member, communicated to the Obama Administration that the long term care sector is a significant contributor to the economic health of communities nationwide, and its stability is vital to stimulate needed economic growth and new jobs.

“Our message to the incoming Obama Administration and Capitol Hill lawmakers is that passing an economic stimulus package that includes a robust Medicaid component is a very wise investment due to the fact seniors' care will be protected, long term care jobs will be created, and the nation's economy strengthened,” stated Lori Porter, a senior spokesperson for the Coalition to Protect Senior Care.

Noting that long term care accounts for 1.1% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) -- \$144 billion annually – Porter said the long term care workforce is an integral part of the local economic base in urban, suburban and rural communities alike. “Our lawmakers in Washington are being responsible in their effort to evaluate the wisest ways in which to invest taxpayer dollars, and any objective analysis will show that long term care job creation offers not just enormous benefits to local economies, but also protecting the growing care needs of a rapidly aging population in need of ever more care and services.”

But even with 2.9 million long term care employees, she observed, the sector still faces a critical workforce shortage as more than 110,000 direct care staff positions remain vacant and ready for new hires. “Recruiting and retaining well-qualified staff is a challenge even in the best of economic times, and investing federal dollars now will go a considerable way towards improving the long term quality of life for our seniors and the longer term economic stability of our local and state economies.”

Porter also said it is essential for federal and state lawmakers to better-understand the highly negative implications associated with the cross-subsidization of Medicaid by Medicare. According to Eljay, LLC, there exists a \$4.2 billion differential between what the states cumulatively fund for Medicaid versus the actual costs incurred by providers. With our Governors wrestling with enormous pressure on their state Medicaid budgets, she said, the last thing seniors and frontline caregivers can afford is federal Medicare cuts.

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