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AHCA/NCAL Urges Support for Grassley Stimulus Provision Protecting Seniors’ Access to Quality Long Term Care  
Key Amendment Ensures FMAP Funds Used to Protect Seniors, Preserve Quality, Promote Provider Stability

Washington, DC – The American Health Care Association and the National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) today strongly endorsed and urged support for an amendment to the pending economic stimulus bill, offered by U.S. Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA). The amendment specifies that no state can be eligible for enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage FMAP (Medicaid) funds if the state reduces seniors’ eligibility standards, benefits, or if the state reduces provider payments.

“We thank Senator Grassley for championing this important issue and protecting the nation’s most vulnerable seniors’ access to quality long term care during a time of unstable and unpredictable state fiscal conditions,” stated Bruce Yarwood, President & CEO of AHCA/NCAL. “Despite many Governors’ best efforts, he said, “nursing home patients’ state Medicaid benefits are being slashed in a growing number of states – to the detriment of seniors and the providers who care for them.”

Specifically, the Grassley effort strengthens the current “maintenance of effort” requirements for receiving enhanced FMAP Medicaid funds. Currently, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (S. 1), would require states to maintain their efforts on Medicaid eligibility – but not in any other area.

"Senator Grassley understands the financial pressures that both Iowa's seniors and long term care providers are being subjected to in this difficult time," said Steve Ackerson, Iowa Health Care Association Executive Director. "His efforts to protect FMAP funding is an important step in making sure that our most vulnerable citizens have access to the long term health care they need."

Yarwood noted there already exists a $4.2 billion negative differential between what the states cumulatively fund for seniors’ growing Medicaid needs versus the actual costs incurred by providers, according to Eljay, LLC. “The problem is only getting worse – and the FMAP funds in
the stimulus bill should rightly be directed towards helping states close the gap between the cost of providing quality care and the actual payments provided.”

“The Grassley Amendment is solid federal eldercare policy that will protect seniors healthcare needs throughout America, and we respectfully urge Senators on both sides of the aisle to support this timely common sense Amendment,” Yarwood concluded.

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