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Long Term Care Leaders Urge State Representative Abel Herrero and Texas Congressional Delegation to Protect Critical State Medicaid Funding

Texas Ranks 49th in the Nation in Medicaid Reimbursement and Faces Proposed Federal Budget Cuts; Trisun Care Center-River Ridge Caregivers Ask Rep. Herrero, Texas State Delegates to Help Strengthen and Protect Texas' Strained Long Term Care System

Corpus Christi, TX (February 12, 2008) – In a facility tour and briefing today with State Representative Abel Herrero (D-Robstown) at Trisun Care Center-River Ridge nursing home, front-line caregivers explained that if the funding cuts to Medicare and Medicaid proposed in President Bush's budget were to pass, Texas seniors' nursing home care would be severely undermined – and asked Rep. Herrero and his fellow delegates to help fight the potential funding cuts in Texas, where seniors are already particularly vulnerable due to Texas' Medicaid rates for nursing homes ranking 49th in the nation.

According to recent data, Texas seniors receive only \$106.59 on average per patient per day, while the national daily average is \$153.83 per patient. Caregivers explained that this difference, over time, can make a major impact in patient care programs and services.

“We appreciate Rep. Herrero's joining us today to meet our residents and staff, and to see first-hand how we can work together to improve Texas' standing in delivering quality long term care,” said Deborah Nugent, Trisun River Ridge's Administrator. “Many citizens, including many of our policymakers in Austin, do not fully realize the dire funding situation facing long term care here in Texas – particularly now taking into account the President's proposed cuts – and we hope to work with our state's political candidates to create additional care improvements and greater long-term security for our patients.”

Trisun Care Center-River Ridge caregivers pointed out that a dialogue on Texas' long term care status is needed to make the issue a broader part of the state and national health care policy debate. At the national level, the National Commission for Quality Long Term Care, headed by former U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey (D-NE) and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA), recently found that most Americans do not understand the nature of long term care funding – with 34 percent believing that most long term care is paid for by Medicare, 20 percent thinking it is paid for by Medicaid, 22 percent believing that individuals and their families pay for most long term care and 13 percent saying they do not know at all how long term care is financed.

“I am thankful for the opportunity to meet with local nursing home residents, their family members and caregivers and to discuss how we can work together to help improve long term care for Texas’ seniors,” said Rep. Herrero. “With Texas’ current low ranking in Medicaid, and additional funding cuts coming out of Washington, now is a particularly important time for us to collaborate on new solutions to protect senior care.”

Representative Herrero, an attorney with Royston, Rayzor, Vickery & Williams in Corpus Christi, is campaigning for re-election for a third term for the 34th District seat of the Texas House of Representatives – including sections of Corpus Christi and the other communities in Nueces County such as Robstown, Bishop, Driscoll, Banquete, Agua Dulce and Petronila.

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About Trisun Care Center-River Ridge nursing home:

TRISUN Care Center River Ridge, located at 3922 W. River Drive in Corpus Christi, provides individualized medical rehabilitation in a beautiful, home-like setting. Its healthcare staff consists of a group of trained professionals dedicated to meeting the needs of each resident, and a full-time activity director is on staff to provide daily fun and to facilitate movement opportunities for all residents. Specialized care focuses on all aspects of the individual, including physical, emotional and spiritual needs.