

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 10, 2008
rreid@txhca.org

CONTACT:
Rebecca Reid: (410) 212-3843,

Local Eldercare Leaders Thank Rep. Eddie Lucio III for Fighting to Strengthen Texas Medicaid Program

State Rank as 49th Nationally in Medicaid Funding Undermines
Most Vulnerable South Texans' Care Needs

Harlingen, TX - In thanking State Rep. Eddie Lucio III (D-38) for touring Preferred Care's La Hacienda Health Center, local long term care leaders said it is essential to generate a broad, serious discussion about how to strengthen the state's most vulnerable seniors' access to quality nursing care, and to rectify Texas' status as 49th nationally in funding elderly Medicaid beneficiaries' growing care needs.

"We appreciate Rep. Lucio joining us today to meet our residents and staff, and to discuss first-hand how we can work together to improve our state's standing when it comes to more adequately meeting the growing long term care needs of the Rio Grande Valley's most vulnerable seniors," said Ricardo Rodriguez, Administrator of La Hacienda.

"Many citizens, including many of our policymakers in Austin, do not fully realize the dire funding situation facing our facility, and facilities across Texas," Rodriguez continued. "While the many component costs of providing quality care continue to rise - especially labor, energy, equipment and food costs - our state Medicaid rate fails to address this, to the detriment of our patients."

Stated Rep. Lucio, "Our oldest citizens, many of whom have no other recourse, need and deserve continued access to quality nursing home care, and improving the adequacy of state Medicaid funding will largely determine whether or not we achieve this important public policy objective. I will remain a voice in Austin seeking the change we need to protect our frail and elderly."

According to a recent study of the nation's Medicaid program, Texas seniors receive only \$106.59 on average per patient per day, while the national daily average is \$153.83 per patient. Rodriguez explained that this difference, over time, can make a major impact in patient care programs and services. Even on a regional basis, Rodriguez explained, Texas is falling behind: New Mexico ranks 30th nationally, at \$137.24; Oklahoma ranks 44th, at \$116.84; Arkansas ranks 47th, at \$111.76; and Louisiana ranks 45th, at \$115.00. (*Source: BDO Seidman/mult.*)

Tim Graves, President of THCA, in Austin, TX, stated, "Ultimately, the long term care funding crisis is all about maintaining care quality standards and dignity for many Texas seniors in their late 70's, 80's and still older, and we intend to make the case that their care needs must be elevated in terms of the public policy dialogue and actual public funding outlays.

"We thank Rep. Lucio for taking the time to visit one of our facilities first hand, and to see the dedication and commitment to care excellence on the part of La Hacienda's management and staff. We look forward to working with him in Austin to ensure every senior in his district receives the care they need, when they need it."

#