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Quality Care of Waco Forum: Front-Line Caregivers Urge Candidates to Focus on Long Term Care, Protect Critical State Medicaid Funding

Texas Ranks 49th in the Nation in Medicaid Reimbursement and Faces Proposed Federal Budget Cuts; Quality Care of Waco Caregivers Urge Candidates to Help Strengthen and Protect Texas' Strained Long Term Care System

Waco, TX (February 19, 2008) – In a candidate forum on quality health care in Waco today at Quality Care of Waco nursing home, front-line caregivers explained that if the funding cuts to Medicare and Medicaid recently proposed in President Bush's budget were to pass, Texas seniors' nursing home care would be severely undermined. In order to protect current and future long term care for Texas seniors, caregivers urged both candidates to help fight these potential funding cuts in Texas, where seniors are already particularly vulnerable due to the state's Medicaid rates for nursing homes ranking 49th in the nation.

During the forum – provided to draw attention to Texas' current long term care standing and encourage new ideas to strengthen senior care – caregivers, elderly residents and their family members stressed that greater investment in Texas' Medicaid program is urgently needed to protect residents, strengthen staffing efforts and enhance ongoing quality improvement efforts in facilities throughout the state. 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 are so pleased to have so many incumbents and challengers here with us today to talk about the issues facing residents and future residents – as well as their families and skilled caregivers – in Texas' long term care system, which is significantly at-risk due to current and potential funding crises,” said Carol Haverkamp, Community Outreach Director. “It is inspiring to see that these candidates are dedicating attention to how to make long term care here in Texas stronger, both for seniors now and for the many residents who will someday need some type of long term care.”

Caregivers pointed out that as presidential candidates are in Texas to compete for the increasingly important March 4 primary, a more substantial 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.

Carol Haverkamp noted that the facility is not endorsing either candidate, but rather invited both to participate in the forum in order to help Texas' office-seekers better understand the plight of their most vulnerable local citizens in long term care.

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About Quality Care of Waco

Established in 1968, Quality Care of Waco is a 224 bed skilled nursing facility providing short term rehabilitation and long term care services.