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## **As Session Opens, Texas Health Care Association Warns of Dire Implications for Seniors, Jobs, Local Communities If Deep Medicaid Rate Cuts Enacted**

*Eldercare Advocates Will Pursue Vigorous Local Debate Surrounding Texas Leaders' Budgetary Priorities*

**Austin, TX** – As the 82nd Session of the Texas Legislature opens for business today, the Texas Health Care Association (THCA) expressed alarm that recently proposed 2% rate cuts to Medicaid-funded nursing home care are merely a prelude to much deeper budget cuts, and said eldercare advocates will aggressively pursue a policy-oriented debate focusing on the local implications of budgetary decisions made in Austin.

“We plan to approach this budget debate in a manner that ensures lawmakers have a very clear understanding about how deep Medicaid cuts will negatively impact their elderly constituents, their local jobs base, and the overall well-being of their local communities,” said Tim Graves, President of THCA. “We intend to ensure the often impersonal numbers debate in Austin does not obscure the fact that real people, with real health challenges, have an enormous stake in this Biennium’s budget.”

The THCA leader said it would be essential in the days and weeks ahead for eldercare advocates to make certain lawmakers have a firm grasp of the series of state and federal budget cuts already absorbed by seniors, caregivers and facilities throughout Texas already operating on the thinnest of margins. Graves said that of the approximately 1,100 skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) in Texas, those with the highest Medicaid census are most in danger should precipitous cuts occur.

Underscoring the fragile nature of the state’s existing long term and post-acute care infrastructure, Graves pointed to the fact the Medicaid census in 551 Texas facilities exceeds 70%, and exceeds 80% in 203 facilities, according to official reports obtained by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC).

“Even before the probability of new cuts to soon be announced, proposed 2% Medicaid rate cuts – on top of last September’s \$25.6 million state Medicaid cuts and federal Medicare cuts of over \$1.5 billion over ten years enacted as part of health care reform – places Texas’ nursing home residents, their caregivers and the local communities in which they reside in clear and present danger,” Graves continued.

“More new Medicaid cuts – on top of cuts on top of cuts – will wreak havoc on seniors’ care, cost thousands of local caregiver jobs, and force facilities to close,” he concluded. “It is that simple, and we will aggressively pursue a fair and objective policy debate centered around maintaining the well being of local seniors and local communities.”

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*Founded in 1950, the Texas Health Care Association (THCA) is the largest long term care association in Texas. THCA represents a broad spectrum of long term care providers and professionals offering long term, rehabilitative and specialized health care services. Member facilities, owned by both for-profit and non-profit entities, include nursing facilities, specialized rehabilitation facilities, and assisted living facilities. For more information, visit [www.txhca.org](http://www.txhca.org).*