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Contact: Tim Graves, (512) 458-1257, tgraves@txhca.org

Rebecca Reid, (410) 212-3843, rreid@txhca.org

Texas Health Care Association: Senate Budget “Woefully Inadequate” in Funding Seniors’ Medicaid-Financed Nursing Home Care

Senate Budget Hundreds of Millions Short in Terms of Meeting Texas Seniors’ Growing Care Needs

AUSTIN, TX (April 2, 2009) – Characterizing the Texas Senate’s budget as “woefully inadequate” to meeting the care needs of Texas’ oldest, most vulnerable seniors, the Texas Health Care Association (THCA) today said the bare bone funding level increase of \$60 million General Revenue (GR) doesn’t connect with the facts that Texas’ Medicaid nursing home rates rank 49th lowest in the nation, and that dozens of community nursing facilities across the state seniors depend upon have closed their doors since January 2006.

“Although we appreciate the effort of the Senate to increase funding for nursing home care in these tough economic times, on behalf of Texas’ most vulnerable seniors and the dedicated workforce who care for them, we believe the Medicaid funding levels put forward by the Texas Senate are woefully inadequate on every level,” said Tim Graves, President of THCA. “Meeting Texas seniors’ special care needs is not optional – and neither is their need for adequate funding,” he continued.

Graves said the only viable funding level is the estimate provided in the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Consolidated Budget showing \$368 million in new General Revenue (GR) funding is needed in the 2010-2011 biennium to address the operating and staffing needs of Texas nursing homes – which serve almost 60,000 Medicaid nursing home residents twenty-four hour a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

“Since 1999, the Texas Legislature has not adequately adjusted funding to meet the rising cost of providing quality care to Medicaid-funded nursing home residents,” the THCA President said. “The Senate is hundreds of millions short in terms of caring for our seniors today, and addressing financially the demographic realities facing our state and citizens tomorrow.” Typically in their 80s and older – and disproportionately afflicted with severe, chronic health and medical conditions – these seniors require specialized around-the-clock care, added Graves.

The THCA leader also said making the appropriate investment in Medicaid represents smart health care policy – as doing so can reduce the number and frequency of hospital admissions by improving resident health and increasing the capability of nursing facilities themselves to successfully treat more complex medical conditions and incidents, at lower cost to taxpayers.

“Growing evidence shows improved investment in long-term care services now can reduce the utilization of much higher cost hospital and emergency room services later,” he continued. “Seniors benefit from improved care, taxpayers benefit from the more efficient use of tax dollars, and our local jobs base is protected and strengthened.”

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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.