



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Tim Graves, Texas Health Care Association
(512) 458-1257, tgraves@txhca.org
Rebecca Reid, 410-212-3843 rreid@txhca.org

**In Final Hours Leading Up to Budget Vote, Statewide Seniors' Advocacy Groups
Implore Texas Lawmakers in New *Statesman* Print Ad,
to Boost Urgently Needed Investment in Medicaid**

Austin, TX – In an unprecedented effort by multiple statewide senior advocacy organizations, The Texas Silver Haired Legislature (TSHL), American Heart Association South Central Texas Affiliate, Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) and Coalition for Nurses in Advanced Practice (CNAP) joined in support of the new full-page ad by the Texas Health Care Association running today in the *Austin American Statesman* urging the Texas Legislature in the waning hours before a critical budget vote to boost Medicaid funding from its current status as 49th lowest in the nation.

The text of the ad, available for view at www.txhca.org is as follows:

“Across Texas, our oldest, most vulnerable seniors and the dedicated staff who provide their quality care are in crisis. Texas’ Medicaid nursing home rates rank 49th lowest in the nation, and dozens of the community nursing facilities our seniors depend upon have recently closed their doors.

“The result? Seniors’ quality care is at risk, and good jobs are in jeopardy. That’s wrong. With time running short in the legislative session, our mothers, fathers, grandparents and neighbors need help from those entrusted to represent them in Austin.

“As advocates for Texas nursing home residents, we call upon our Texas lawmakers to make seniors’ care the funding priority it deserves to be. Our Seniors Have Been There For Us — Now We Need To Be There For Them.”

“We believe Texas citizens really do want our seniors to have adequate care, and are willing to share in paying the costs,” said Carlos Higgins, Chairman of the Silver-Haired Legislature’s, Legislative Action Committee. “Instead of putting patients at risk for years to come by yet another two years of short-changing nursing homes, we believe now is the right time to do the right thing for all of Texas. After all, this huge infusion of federal stimulus dollars would not only help provide adequate care for seniors, it’d be a big boost for our Texas work-force and for our economy.”

“Providing long term health care services to our elderly is a rewarding profession and providers must be able to offer competitive wages to capable individuals looking for employment in their communities,” said Lynda Woolbert, MSN, RN, PNP with the Coalition for Nurses in Advanced Practice (CNAP). “Without adequate funding, nursing home providers cannot attract and retain staff to fill hundreds of vacancies in facilities throughout the state. During this time when Texas is seeking jobs growth, long term care is a place to look.”

Tim Graves, President of THCA, said his membership across the state is actively contacting legislators about the need to increase Medicaid. “Beyond the fact that it is finally time to address Texas’ ranking of 49th nationally in terms of Medicaid funding, investing in this key program will protect seniors’ access to quality nursing home care, maintain a strong local jobs base, and strengthen our capacity to care for a growing number of seniors across the state,” Graves said.

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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.