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Contact: Roger L. Noyes (518) 810-0665
(518) 275-6961 cell

Record Gathering For HCA's Advocacy Day Urges Restoration of Vital Home Health Care Funding

*State's Top Legislative Leaders Scheduled to Address HCA Advocates
Rallying Against \$100-plus Million in Proposed Home Health Care Budget Cuts*

The Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) today holds its Advocacy Day at the Capitol where advocates will call upon legislators to overturn an unprecedented \$100-plus million in devastating home health care cuts proposed in the 2008-09 Executive State Budget.

"These proposed cuts, the biggest in recent memory, call for a big, coordinated response," said HCA President Joanne Cunningham about today's projected record gathering for HCA's Advocacy Day. Over 150 participants from 52 agencies throughout the state are expected to meet with more than 80 state legislators to voice opposition to these cuts.

"This vocal, mobilized group of home health care professionals will illustrate just how harmful these proposed budget cuts are to quality patient care, needed cost-saving infrastructure development and the overall viability of New York's home health provider agencies," Cunningham said.

Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Senate Health Committee Chairman Kemp Hannon and Assembly Health Committee Chairman Richard Gottfried are all scheduled to address advocates of home health care as part of today's events.

"We are extremely grateful that New York's top elected leaders made the time to explain how home health care fits into their legislative agendas," Cunningham said. "This is a clear sign that high-ranking lawmakers recognize our concerns. Now we hope to see that they share our concerns for quality patient care by restoring these devastating cuts."

Reacting to the \$100-plus million in proposed budget cuts, HCA has begun a comprehensive advocacy campaign involving a statewide, grass-roots media and legislative outreach effort. That effort highlights a recent Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS)/Siena Research Institute poll which found that **94 percent of New Yorkers oppose funding cuts to home health care and 76 percent support increased home health care funding while only 3 percent believe home health care funding should be cut.**

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The proposed budget cuts HCA opposes include:

- **\$28 million (state and federal shares) in the Medicaid Trend Factor for certified home health agencies (CHHAs), long term home health care programs (LTHHCPs) and personal care providers.** The Trend Factor is an inflationary adjustment intended to fill the gap between an outdated cost profile the state uses to establish Medicaid rates and present-day, actual costs. **A prior-year budget deal already set the Trend Factor below the rate of medical inflation,** failing to keep pace with new or rising home health care expenses. (\$14 million is needed for state share restoration.)
- **\$24 million (state and federal shares) in cuts to Administrative & General (A&G) reimbursement to CHHAs and LTHHCPs.** The A&G functions as a catch-all for reimbursing critical services not covered elsewhere in the home health care reimbursement structure, including case management, outreach and assessment, technology investment and corporate compliance measures – **all of which have been a focus of the state’s health care quality assurance efforts.** (\$12 million is needed for state share restoration.)
- **\$26 million (state and federal shares) in cuts through a reimbursement base year freeze at 2005 levels and rate cuts for each home health service provided by a CHHA,** including nursing, physical therapy, home health aide services and others. (\$13 million is needed for state share restoration.)
- **\$16 million (state and federal shares) in cuts to the premium rate for managed long term care plans (MLTCs).** These cuts run counter to the state’s goals of promoting coverage through integrated care models. (\$8 million is needed for state share restoration.)
- **\$16 million (state and federal shares) in needed restorations for the home health care infrastructure in Rural/Upstate/Long Island regions of New York.** This cut omits \$16 million included in the budget for the past two years – an essential part of the present funding baseline for providers. This rate component is used to: increase the application of technology in the delivery of services; provide specialty training in dementia, pediatric and other complex care or conditions; cover increased auto and travel expenses associated with rising fuel prices; and/or provide enhanced care to high-need populations. (\$8 million is needed for state share restoration.)

“Our goal is to help patients stay in their homes when it's the preferred setting by making home health care a practical and viable option,” Cunningham said.

“Since the patient’s home is the primary care environment, home health care providers already operate on a lean scale,” Cunningham concluded. “With nowhere else but this primary care environment to distribute the shock, these cuts are a direct hit to quality patient care.”

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*Committed to the principles of high-quality and cost-effective community based health care, the **Home Care Association of New York State** (HCA) assists its members on state and federal legislation, regulations and reimbursement issues pertinent to the home health field. As the premier home health care association in New York State, HCA represents more than 400 home health care providers, individuals and associate members who collectively provide service and support to thousands of New Yorkers.*