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NEWS RELEASE

Demand for Home-Based Care At Record High; Funding Must Follow

Lemoyne, PA (April 30, 2021) – Today, the Pennsylvania Homecare Association (PHA) held a virtual press conference to address the unprecedented demand for home-based care, and the barriers providers face in serving Pennsylvanians in need, including limited funding, a critical workforce shortage, and regulatory obstacles.

In today's world, home care providers are able to provide a wider range of services to individuals in their homes than at any time in history. These include: post-surgery physical therapy; assisting seniors and individuals with disabilities with activities of daily living, such as bathing, meal prep, and using the toilet; nursing services that allow medically fragile children to live and receive care in their homes, instead of institutional settings; hospice care; and much more.

Unfortunately, home and community-based services (HCBS) have been chronically underfunded, due, in part, to an outdated Medicaid system that never contemplated community-based supports for older adults and those with disabilities, and favors nursing homes over home and community-based care.

Long before COVID-19, the demand for home-based care was growing rapidly. The public health emergency has only accelerated that trend, and providers are struggling more than ever to recruit and retain qualified home care workers. Low wages and high turnover further threaten access to long-term services and supports for those most in need.

Pennsylvania has approximately 234,000 direct care workers. The demand for these caregivers is expected to increase by 37,000 in the coming years, and the challenge to recruit and retain qualified caregivers is only growing, as private employers offer \$15/hour and more for much less demanding work.

Home care agencies serving individuals through the Medicaid program simply cannot compete with these wages. Medicaid reimbursement rates range from \$17.88-\$19.92/hour for direct care workers, and are expected to cover not only caregiver wages, but also overtime, travel, training, background checks, PPE, and other expenses. At the same time, reimbursement rates for pediatric shift nursing have only been increased twice in 28 years, resulting in a massive wage gap between facility-based nurses and home health care, and making it impossible for home health agencies to compete for workers.

“We are at a critical moment in Pennsylvania,” said Teri Henning, Esq., CEO of the Pennsylvania Homecare Association, “and we have an historic opportunity – with almost \$8 billion in funding coming from the federal government – to correct long-term funding inequities in our Medicaid system. If safeguards, including increased funding, are not put in place to stabilize shortages of this critical workforce and support the agencies providing care, vulnerable Pennsylvanians are going to face dangerous barriers to accessing quality care at home.

“Home is where people want to age, heal, and receive care. It provides better outcomes for patients and consumers and is less than half the cost of nursing home care. PHA and its members urge legislators and the administration to prioritize investment in home and community-based services so that Pennsylvanians can continue to have the choice to receive quality care in the safety and comfort of their own homes.

Healthcare has come home; home care must be adequately funded.

About PHA... The Pennsylvania Homecare Association is a statewide membership organization of more than 700 homecare, home health and hospice providers. PHA members provide quality care and serve as advocates for their patients and clients on a variety of healthcare related issues. PHA and its members work to improve professional standards and ensure access to quality homecare throughout the Commonwealth. To learn more, visit www.pahomecare.org.

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