



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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#### **Media Contact**

Eric Kiehl, Public Affairs Director  
Pennsylvania Homecare Association  
(800) 382-1211 ext. 26  
(717) 422-2025 – mobile  
ekiehl@pahomecare.org

### **REAL Coalition Express Concerns with Proposed Consumer Workforce Council**

*Council Could Require Workers to Join State-funded Homecare Agency*

Harrisburg – (November 20, 2008) – A coalition of home and community-based providers testified today at a hearing of the House Republican Policy Committee to express concerns about a proposal that could require workers who provide in-home care to seniors and individuals with disabilities to join a state-funded homecare registry called the Consumer Workforce Council.

“We commend Rep. Mike Turzai, Rep. Mauree Gingrich and the House Republican Policy Committee for holding this hearing to learn about the growing challenges facing the homecare workforce and the concerns that many consumers and providers have in the creation of the Consumer Workforce Council,” said Vicki Hoak, executive director of the Pennsylvania Homecare Association, whose organization is a member of the Coalition for REAL (Respected, Empowered, Accessible and Loyal) Home and Community-Based Services.

“Having what is in essence a state-operated homecare agency would be redundant and a very unnecessary expense for Pennsylvania taxpayers. There is already an expansive home and community-based provider network in the commonwealth. There are nearly 800 homecare agencies caring for thousands of our elderly and individuals with disabilities every day.”

“While we agree that direct care workers need better pay and health care benefits, we disagree with this proposal to achieve that, especially in light of our state’s present financial climate. There are many other ways – for example, yearly cost of living adjustments – to ensure that direct care workers have better wages and benefits.

“If our state government truly wants to increase the wages and benefits of direct care workers, it must increase the reimbursement for these vital services,” Hoak said.

The REAL Coalition opposes the proposed Council concept in part because it would create a new level of bureaucracy. While there are similar public authorities operating in a handful of states, including California and Washington, Hoak emphasized that those states’ programs and provider networks were not as extensive and sophisticated at the time their authorities were created as Pennsylvania’s are now.

“We do not have an access problem. Consumers have a variety of options when it comes to getting in-home care. They can choose from the 800 existing homecare and attendant care providers in the state, or they can hire their own direct care worker, such as a friend or family member,” explained Hoak. “Creating this Council would only add additional costs to a system that is already seriously under-funded.”

Other organizations in the REAL Coalition include the Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the National Private Duty Association and the Pennsylvania Providers Coalition Association.

William Kepner, Senior Vice President and COO, United Disabilities Services testified at the hearing that this proposal could take away consumer control.

“Consumers could be forced to have the direct care workers they employ join the Council’s registry, which officials have already implied would eventually become a union leading to increased costs including training fees and dues. Consumers don’t need another bureaucracy duplicating services and adding costs; what they do need are more funds earmarked to help them maintain their independence and remain in their own homes.”

Additional information on the Coalition for REAL Home and Community-Based Services in Pennsylvania can be found at [www.realinhomecarepa.com](http://www.realinhomecarepa.com)

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