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Ohio Health Care Association Says Governor Kasich’s Proposed Cuts to Skilled Nursing Facilities Will Hurt Jobs, Vulnerable Ohioans

COLUMBUS -- Governor John Kasich today released what he calls “The Jobs Budget,” but for Ohio’s elderly and disabled it’s the “Care Cutting” Budget. “Make no mistake, the Governor’s budget threatens the quality of care for the most vulnerable among us,” said Peter Van Runkle, Executive Director of the Ohio Health Care Association the state’s largest organization representing long-term care providers. “We are talking about those who can no longer take care of themselves or be taken care of by family,” Van Runkle continued.

Skilled Nursing care is highly labor intensive. “Nearly 70% of the costs go to personnel costs - nurses, aides, physicians, physical therapists- all of whom are critical to ensuring that our most vulnerable receive the care and dignity they deserve.” Van Runkle explained. The Governor’s budget cuts reimbursement rates a staggering $380 million over the next two years. This is on top of a $190 million tax increase imposes in the last budget. Over the last two budgets skilled nursing facilities have incurred over a 10% cut in funding. That tax increase will stay in place under the Governor’s budget. Skilled nursing facility reimbursement rates have been essentially flat, except for the tax increases, since 2005.

This budget proposal kills jobs, jeopardizes care and threatens the very existence of skilled nursing facilities across Ohio. “The Governor’s cuts will result in closed facilities and will place tremendous hardship on families who will be forced to travel long distances to visit loved ones. Connection to family is a critical aspect of quality care that can’t be measured in dollars and cents. It’s difficult to understand how this will help Ohio move forward.” Van Runkle continued. The Ohio Healthcare Association has long supported expanded home and community-based care for “mom and dad,” as the Governor has called for. However, those services cannot take the place of a more acute, sicker population that still needs the level of care of a skilled nursing facility.

“We hope that members of the Legislature will understand the importance of skilled nursing facilities to their constituents. It is up to them to protect the quality care and jobs provided by skilled nursing facilities in their districts to ensure that adequate funding is provided to protect quality care,” Van Runkle concluded.

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“The Governor claimed in his press conference that the budget was not based on arbitrary cuts, and that all the proposals had a policy basis, said Van Runkle “I don’t know what the policy basis is for paying skilled nursing facilities at the lowest 25% of 2003 costs, to the detriment of jobs and patients. That sounds like just a plain cut to me, and it will hurt people.”

The Ohio Health Care Association is a non-profit association of more than 700 SNFs, assisted living communities, and providers serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, representing over 50,000 individuals. Many OHCA members also provide a variety of home and community-based services. OHCA is the largest long-term care association in the state, and the only chartered Ohio affiliate of the American Health Care Association, representing more than 12,000 long-term care facilities nationwide.

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