

Wisconsin Health Care Association and Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living: Applaud funding increase in state budget

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CONTACT: Allison Cramer, (608) 257-0125

MADISON — The Wisconsin Health Care Association and Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living (WHCA/WiCAL) today thanked Governor Tony Evers for approving budget proposals to support long-term care in Wisconsin.

“Long-term care providers thank Governor Evers for signing a state budget which includes critical investments in long-term care in Wisconsin. The Governor and State Legislature have shown their strong commitment to long-term care providers, staff, and the residents they have the privilege to serve by including \$154 million (all funds) in new money for skilled nursing Medicaid reimbursement increases and additional Family Care funding,” said John Vander Meer, President and CEO of WHCA/WiCAL.

Governor Evers approved significant increases in Medicaid reimbursement for skilled nursing facilities as well as additional Family Care funding. The budget includes a \$15 million GPR increase to support nursing homes in the first year of the biennium, plus 1% for acuity amount to a 7.4% increase. There is an additional 1%

in the second year of the biennium. In total, this budget includes \$30 million in GPR funding and \$87.5 million all funds for nursing home reimbursement increases for the biennium. In the Family Care program, providers received a \$27 million increase in GPR funding for Direct Care Workforce funding. With federal matching funds, this amounts to a \$66.5 million increase in Family Care workforce funding.

These critical funding increases come on the heels of significant underfunding of Wisconsin's skilled nursing Medicaid reimbursement system. Inadequate reimbursement has led to a caregiver workforce crisis, where 1 in 5 caregiver positions remains vacant in Wisconsin. Since 2016, 30 skilled nursing facilities have closed their doors - including a staggering 11 facilities announcing their closure this year alone and another 27 currently in receivership. Workforce challenges and facility closures raise concerns of access issues for vulnerable citizens in every corner of our state.

"This budget will help providers fill needed caregiver positions and increase care access for Wisconsin's frail elderly and residents with disabilities," Vander Meer said. "Wisconsin's long-term care providers thank the Governor and the Legislature for advancing these important funding increases to help providers care for Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens."

The Wisconsin Health Care Association (WHCA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to representing, protecting and advancing the interests of Wisconsin's long-term and post-acute care provider community and the residents they serve. The Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living (WiCAL) is a division of WHCA that advocates for assisted living facilities by helping our members provide the highest quality services to the Badger State's frail and elderly citizens.