



Washington Health Care Association

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Advocates for the Long-Term Care of Washington's Elderly and Frail

June 14, 2010

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

As President and CEO of the Washington Health Care Association (WHCA), I respectfully request that you act quickly to secure passage of legislation extending the temporary increase in FMAP to June 30, 2011. WHCA is an organization of 400 nursing homes and assisted living homes, serving over 12,000 Medicaid eligible senior and disabled residents and employing over 25,000 workers. By extending the enhanced FMAP funding, you will be providing resources that assure the continuation of quality care and quality of life to all those we serve.

As you well know, Washington like so many other states is desperately trying to continue vital state services to many populations while recovering from a very hard hit economy. The individuals we serve with Medicaid funding in our nursing homes and assisted living homes represent some of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society today. The state budget for FY 2011 assumes that there will be state general fund and FMAP funding in the amount of \$498 million for nursing homes and \$32 million for assisted living homes. If the FMAP extender bill is not approved by congress, nursing homes and assisted living homes will lose approximately \$68 million in federal funds. Given the expected condition of the budget in Washington for the next year, there is no possibility that these federal funds can be replaced by state general funds.

As you know, Washington is similar to some 30 other states in assuming that the enhanced FMAP rate would continue through June 30, 2011. That assumption was based on the fact that both the House of Representatives and the Senate had earlier passed an extension of FMAP. Without an extension of the FMAP rate, thousands of workers in nursing homes and assisted living homes will be unemployed and the quality of care and quality of life for residents will be seriously compromised. In recent years, our long term care facilities have not seen any increases in Medicaid reimbursement rates, in fact the rates are being reduced for FY 2011 because of the state budget. It is unreasonable to assume that as Medicaid resources decline, we can continue to provide quality care for a growing number of elderly with increasingly complex needs.

So, on behalf of the residents we serve, their families and our employees, I urge you to work with your colleagues and leadership to take swift action to extend the FMAP temporary assistance and avoid further cuts to Medicaid. Thank you for your support of this request.

Sincerely,

Gary Weeks
President/CEO