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## **WHCA/WiCAL Statement: Long Term Care is Key in Ensuring Wisconsin's Economic Growth**

MADISON – Today, Executive Director Thomas Moore made the following statement on behalf of the Wisconsin Health Care Association (WHCA) and Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living (WiCAL):

“This week, Governor Doyle delivered his final State of the State address and President Obama delivered his first State of the Union address. In both speeches, job creation was deemed the key to an economic rebound. However, the state and nation’s job growth prospects are not limited to manufacturing and entrepreneurship.

“From small towns to sprawling urban areas, Wisconsin’s long term care facilities are major employers that provide both rewarding, high-wage jobs and invaluable services to the frail and elderly they serve. These nursing homes and assisted living facilities are vital to the economic and employment base of communities across the state, and they are vital important to the growing number of citizens who require quality long term care– and the millions more who will need it in the years ahead. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, health care will generate 3.2 million new wage and salary jobs between 2008 and 2018 – more than any other industry, largely in response to rapid growth in the elderly population.

“Wisconsin’s long term care facilities are an integral part of the state’s economy, contributing more than \$5 billion annually through job creation, tax revenue, and payment for goods and services. Wisconsin nursing homes directly employ more than 50,000 workers – roughly the same number employed by the state’s paper, plastics, real estate, and accommodation industries. And in many rural communities, local nursing homes and assisted living communities are often the largest employers.

“However, long term care facilities throughout the state struggle daily to both provide quality care and keep their doors open. Wisconsin ranked dead last in the country again this year in Medicaid reimbursement rates. Our long term care facilities devote a full 70 percent of operating expenses to wages, benefits, and other labor costs, and Medicaid payment rates to nursing homes for care provided falls short by more than \$280 million annually. With Medicaid funding stability directly

tied to staffing stability, the potential of future cuts to Medicaid could mean lost jobs, staffing dislocation, and compromised care.

“Over and over again, both in the most recent state budget and those of years past, the long term care sector – and the needs of those it serves –has been ignored and shortchanged.

“Wisconsin’s long-term care providers are ready, willing, and able to create and maintain good-paying jobs in every area of the state. They could play a significant role in rebooting the state’s economy; but to do so, elected officials must prioritize the protection and preservation of funding for those who receive and provide care to the frail and elderly.”

*Thomas Moore is the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Health Care Association, the state’s largest advocacy organization for long term care providers and the residents they serve. He can be reached at [tomm@whca.com](mailto:tomm@whca.com).*

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