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Nursing Home Resident Advocacy Groups Oppose Health Bill Exemption Call on HHS to Deny Nursing Home Industry “Cop Out”

U.S. National -- Today, a dozen nursing home resident advocacy groups from across America called for nursing home owners to provide health insurance benefits to employees as required under the new federal health care law.

The call comes in reaction to a May 16th, *New York Times* article citing a move by industry representatives to seek an exemption from the employee insurance requirement in the new Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act – which, ironically, the nursing home industry supported – requiring all nursing homes that employ more than 50 employees offer basic health care coverage by 2014.

“The industry’s request for this exemption is an outrage and an affront to the millions of residents for whom they are entrusted to care for; this is a cruel oxymoron that a health care industry sector (which is largely government-funded) would seek to deny their employees basic health care coverage,” said Brian Lee, a longtime resident ombudsman and the Executive Director of Families for Better Care. He added, “caregivers who are unable to pay for treatments when they themselves are sick endanger the health, safety and welfare of residents.”

In a resolution signed by all 24 groups and sent to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the groups demanded that HHS summarily deny the nursing home industry’s recent request, “This request comes at a time when the nursing home industry continues to reap recession-defying record profits, while enjoying strong earnings and steady growth,” said Lee. “This is another example of nursing home ‘big business’ trumping resident and caregiver safety in lieu of high investment returns for shareholders.”

The following organizations from across America signed the resolution:

1. A Perfect Cause
2. Advocates Committed to Improving Our Nursing Homes
3. Arkansas Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
4. California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
5. Cape United Elders of Community Action Committee
6. CareWatchers
7. Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly
8. Coalition for Quality Care

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9. Elder Care Rights Alliance
10. Families for Better Care
11. Florida Voices for Quality Care
12. Foundation Aiding the Elderly
13. Kansas Advocates for Better Care
14. Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform
15. Long-Term Care Community Coalition
16. Maine Voices for Quality Care
17. Maryland Voices for Quality Care
18. Massachusetts Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
19. Michigan Campaign for Quality Care
20. Michigan Citizens for Better Care
21. Nursing Home Monitors
22. Resident Councils of Washington
23. Texas Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
24. Washington D.C. Voices for Quality Care

Lee closed, "I am very grateful to these organizations and their members who have boldly taken a stand on this vital issue, nursing home residents and their families will appreciate their advocacy."

Brian Lee served as the State of Florida nursing home resident ombudsman for most of the past decade. He now serves as the Executive Director of the long-term care resident advocacy group; Families For Better Care, Inc.

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