

Date

TO: CAHSAH Members and Friends

FROM: Joseph H. Hafkenschiel

RE: Opportunities for Letters to the Editor and Internet Outreach

As you know, November is National Home Care & Hospice Month. This presents an important opportunity to not only recognize the home care professionals who work tirelessly assisting some of our most frail citizens, but also to raise awareness with the public, the media and lawmakers of the importance of home care as an essential component of an integrated health care delivery system.

Additionally, there have been a number of recent stories on TV, radio, in print and on the Internet about long-term health care and home care. For example, there have been stories about a recent MetLife study that found the cost of long-term care continues to outpace the rate of medical inflation, as well as stories about the Obama Administration's decision to suspend implementation of the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act (CLASS).

Issues related to our aging population, to cuts in social services that result from the state's ongoing budget troubles, and to the generally increasing costs of care, provide opportunities for us to promote the need for, and value of, home care, home health and hospice care. Following are suggestions for how each of us can help reach more audiences with our key messages:

Promote Stories that Relate to our Issues

- Occasionally send your legislators a copy of stories that have to do with aging, the cost of long-term care, or the benefits of home care, along with a brief note that talks about how the story relates to your local area.
- Add an online comment on the website for a newspaper, radio station or television station when it runs a story related to our issues. Find the story on the organization's website, comment about why the issue is important to those who live in your area, and thank the news organization for looking at issues important to those who need home health care.
- Send your Twitter followers the link to a good story – just find the story on the news organization's web page and click on the Tweet icon.
- Post an important story to your Facebook Page – again, find the story on the news organization's web page, click on the Facebook icon, write a brief comment, and click on the Share Link icon. You'll see a message that it has been posted to your Facebook page and it will appear there with the media source's logo.

Many news organizations now are using data on which stories attract the most Internet "hits" when they decide what issues to cover. Let's help elevate issues related to home care, our clients, our regulatory challenges and opportunities by commenting on stories as they appear in local, regional, statewide and national media.

Responding to News Stories with a Letter to the Editor

When stories appear in your local paper on home care, long-term health care, aging or other issues that can broadly relate to home care, use those as an opportunity draw attention to the valuable role home care plays in our continuum of care by submitting a letter to the editor on the importance of home care.

Submitting a Letter to the Editor

- To submit a letter to the editor, begin by going online to your local newspaper's website and search for "letter to the editor."
- Read the submission instructions, noting the word limit – most set a limit of 200 words. Generally, the shorter the letter, the greater chance it will be accepted.
- Before completing the online submission form, prepare your letter in a Word document so you can save it, verify your word count, and be able to copy it into the online form.
- Return to the online submission form and copy your letter from Word and paste it into the appropriate box.
- Be sure to fill out the remainder of the online form. It is important that you provide your name and correct contact information – the paper will not print this information; however they need to be able to reach you if they have any questions.

Writing Your Letter to the Editor

- Write the letter from your own perspective. Following are suggested key messages for several topics, each capitalizing on different points. When drafting your letter, feel free to pull messages from the different suggestions to create a letter that makes the points you wish to make.
- The most persuasive letters are those that are personal, so describe why you care about home care and include a personal anecdote in your message. Any figures or statistics that you have for your local community are good to include as well.
- If your letter is in response to an article you read in that newspaper, mention the article date and topic – it may elevate the likelihood that your letter will get printed. Also, it's best to write a letter the day the article appears and submit online that same day.
- The greeting line should read "Dear Editor:" and you might want to begin the body of your letter with something like "As someone who [works with] [cares for] [uses home care] ..."

Suggested Topics and Key Messages for Letters to the Editor

Again, letters should be written in your own voice. However, to make it easier to quickly draft a letter to the editor, following are suggested topics and key messages for your reference and use. Remember, keep your letter short and direct – usually no more than 200 words.

Key Messages for Letter on: National Home Care & Hospice Month

- November is National Home Care & Hospice Month, a time to recognize the home care professionals who assist some of our most frail citizens and help them to remain at home and in the community.
- "Home care" encompasses all health and social services delivered in a private residence to the elderly, disabled, and recovering, disabled, chronically or terminally ill adults and children. Services include medical, nursing, social, therapeutic and pain

management treatment, as well as assistance with activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, cooking, and household chores.

- Home care is a popular choice for many people. In fact, nine out of ten people say they prefer home care over institutional care. Home care helps people stay independent, keeps families together, and combines efficiency and compassion with the latest in health care technology.
- The use of personal care services in California increased 33.6 percent from 2003 to 2007, surpassing nursing home admissions to become the most used long-term care service in the state. Home care allows individuals to “age in place” receiving the care they need in the comfort of their home. The trend toward home care will continue as the population ages and as costs for providing health care in California remain a significant concern.
- In honor of National Home Care & Hospice Month, we suggest you take some time to discuss long-term care options with your family and loved ones. If you are currently caring for a loved one, or know you will need to make arrangements in the near future, you can visit the California Association for Health Services at Home at www.cahsah.org to get more information on home care.

Key Messages for Letter on: Our Aging Population Will Increase the Need for Long-term Care

- According to the California Healthcare Foundation, the number of Californians age 65 and older is likely to more than triple between the years of 2000 and 2050, with the group age 85 and older experiencing the largest increase.
- As the population ages and individuals are living longer, it is more important than ever to have cost-effective options available that provide the support that many elderly need to stay in their homes.
- About 20 million people, including more than two-thirds of people over age 65, are expected to need long-term care at some point in the coming years, but only 7 million have private insurance to help cover the costs.
- A recent MetLife study shows that while costs for long-term health care options such as nursing homes continue to rise, the costs for home care has stayed steady making it an affordable, cost-effective option for long-term care.
 - Nationally, home care is less than half the cost of nursing home care and about half the cost of assisted living.
 - While nursing home costs increased 4.4% from 2010 and assisted living increased 5.6%, the costs for home care stayed about the same.
- We encourage families to talk about the potential need for long-term care and to explore the choices that may be available.
- To learn more about the options for home care and home health care, visit the California Association for Health Services at Home at www.cahsah.org

Key Messages for Letter on: AB 889 Would Make Home Care Less Effective and More Expensive

- As our population continues to age and the state is cutting services to the elderly and disabled, we need more options for affordable and effective long-term care, not fewer.
- About 20 million people, including more than two-thirds of people over age 65, are expected to need long-term care at some point in the coming years, but only 7 million have private insurance to help cover the cost.
- Home care provides quality service at an affordable price to the elderly and disabled, and to chronically or terminally ill adults and children.
- Unfortunately, there is state legislation that, if passed, would drive up the cost of home care by mandating rules that are impossible to follow – such as home care providers need an uninterrupted eight hours of sleep, even if they are hired to care for the elderly or ill overnight.

- AB 889 by Assembly Member Tom Ammiano of San Francisco would remove the flexibility needed to provide quality care at an affordable price.
- For example, the U.S. average daily rate for a live-in home health aide is \$258. If AB 889 passes, the cost will increase to \$407 per day to ensure all the extra rules could be met for when and how home health workers take breaks or have meals.
- About 70% of those who have a home health aide are age 75 or older and have fixed or low incomes. A cost increase of 58%, as would occur under AB 889, is unmanageable for many families that rely on home care to provide needed support and help when taking care of loved ones.
- To ensure patients and families have access to the home care they need at an affordable price, the Legislature should reject AB 889.

Key Messages for Letter on: AB 899 Would Require Home Care Agencies be Licensed to Promote Quality and Protect Patients

- Home care is a popular choice for many when they themselves or their loved ones are elderly, disabled, recovering from illness or injury, or are chronically or terminally ill. With new medical procedures, portable technology, skilled staff, and caring home care aides, many services can now be effectively administered in the warmth and security of the home.
- The use of personal care services in California increased 33.6 percent from 2003 to 2007, surpassing nursing home admissions to become the most used long-term care service in the state.
- With so many people receiving home care, ensuring quality of care is essential. For this reason, the California Association of Health Services at Home (CAHSAH) has partnered with Assembly Member Mariko Yamada to sponsor AB 899, legislation that would require the state Department of Social Services to license and regulate home care agencies.
- AB 899 would make home care agencies responsible for ensuring that their caregivers are qualified and reputable, and would make the agency responsible for the quality of care provided by those providing care in the home.
- Another bill, SB 411 by Senator Curren Price, would require the individual long-term care workers in California be certified by the state – rather than place responsibility for licensing with the home care agency.
- SB 411 would place an unnecessary burden on the workers who provide care in the home, place another regulatory burden on home health agencies that would have to do certificate checks, and would create a labor shortage as the state tried to license the thousands of home care workers in the state.
- AB 899 is a much more rational approach to licensing the home care industry because it places responsibility for the quality of care squarely on the companies and agencies who hire and place home care workers in private residences.
- As our population ages, we need to ensure there are effective – and enforceable – rules in place to protect the elderly, disabled, and others who rely on home care for the assistance they need to stay in their homes and their communities.

Help Tell Our Stories

We already have provided information on reaching out to lawmakers to invite them to visit a home care patient, as well as information on how to reach out to media to promote stories on home care and home health care. Using other stories related to our key issues also gives us additional opportunities to educate lawmakers, regulators and the public about the increasing need for home health services as our state and our country prepares for the “silver tsunami” we will face as our population ages and people live longer.

We thank you in advance for participating in this important letter-writing campaign to raise awareness about the important place home care has in the larger continuum of care. If you have caregivers, clients or their families who would be willing to draft a letter to the editor for their local paper as well, please forward this message. The more letters we send, the more likely they will get published and the more our collective voice will be heard! As always, the CAHSAH team looks forward to answering any questions you may have.