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Nursing Home Resident Advocacy Group Blasts Industry Health Care Exemption for Employees Will Jeopardize Resident Safety

Tallahassee, Florida—Today, Brian Lee, Executive Director of Families for Better Care, harshly criticized the nursing home industry trade group, American Health Care Association (AHCA) for what he calls, “an outrageous act of deceit.”

In a letter to the group’s president, Mark Parkinson, Mr. Lee asked the industry to reverse its position, to recognize the strong profitability of the industry and to provide essential health care benefits for industry employees. Lee, a longtime resident ombudsman and advocate, stated in his letter,

“As I am sure you are aware and will agree, the basic health of frontline caregivers is an essential element in the service and custodial care of residents. Having workers calling in sick too often (because they were unable to avail themselves of preventative care) or – even worse – showing up and working while sick will severely jeopardize the safety and well-being of residents.”

Lee’s reaction comes in response to an article published in the *New York Times* on May 15, 2011 in which Parkinson said his organization is seeking an exemption from the new federal health care law. The exemption will allow nursing home operators to opt out of providing basic health care coverage for their employees. In the article, Parkinson claimed corporate poverty even blaming, ironically, government reimbursements from Medicare and Medicaid for his industry’s woes.

“Mr. Parkinson’s shameful comments come at the same time when the nursing home industry is reaping record profits, while enjoying strong earnings and strong growth,” said Lee. “If these unwarranted exemptions are approved, workforce quality will suffer and resident health will be severely jeopardized.”

Lee also outlined several trade industry articles citing strong, even record setting profits in the industry and asked that the industry reconsider its dangerous position.

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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