



Visiting
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Home Health Care ■ Hospice Care ■ Private Care



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Visiting Nurse and Community Health CEO calls on Congress to improve home care for seniors

WASHINGTON, DC – Christine Dixon, CEO of Visiting Nurse and Community Health (VNCH), met with staff from Senators John Kerry and Scott Brown's offices and with Congressman Jim McGovern recently. Ms. Dixon joined hundreds of home care and hospice leadership executives from across the nation in Washington D.C. March 27-30 as part of the annual March on Washington, hosted by the National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC). NAHC called on Congress to improve home care and hospice for seniors.

Recently, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC), issued a report recommending Congress impose a new co-payment obligation on Medicare home health patients, and that provider payment rates be cut in several ways starting in 2012 and thereafter. Unfortunately, if Congress were to adopt MedPAC's recommendations, the opposite would occur – seniors and disabled Americans would have less access to home health care and costs would rise for patients, families in the Medicare program.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that our seniors and the disabled are able to access home health care without having any new, prohibitive and potentially high expenses imposed on them," explained Ms. Dixon. "Our mission is to treat the patients entrusted to us in the comfort of their own homes, as is their expressed wish. Now as never before, we must advocate strongly for seniors' health care rights. This is why my visits to Senators Kerry and Brown and Congressman McGovern were so important to our patients and families, the organization, and to me."

A strong home health care system is essential to the health and economic well-being of millions of seniors and disabled Americans. Home-based care is clinically effective, utilizing advanced technologies and helping to cost-effectively manage chronic diseases that account for 75 percent of our nation's health care spending. Millions of America's seniors and disabled citizens depend on it, and NAHC is urging Congress and the administration to reject both the extended 2012 funding reduction and the requirement that seniors pay out of pocket.

The 2011 Medicare cuts to home care agencies, coupled with the new CMS mandate that patients need to have a face-to-face encounter with their MD prior to receiving home care services, has jeopardized access. The annual march comes at a time when \$12 billion in Medicare cuts to health care are already planned over the next few years, even though home care and hospice is more cost effective, saving billions in Medicare expenditures. In 2009, the average home care visit cost \$135.00 per day versus the average hospital visit which cost \$1,500 a day. Preventive home health care saves Medicare and Medicaid billions of dollars per year.

– more –

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About VNCH

For over 110 years, VNCH, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, has been acknowledged as the preeminent home health care provider in eastern Massachusetts. It has a deep-rooted tradition of providing its patients and the communities it serves with compassionate, quality home care, and unparalleled health care expertise. VNCH's response to questions and concerns is immediate and knowledgeable, and its medical technology is state-of-the-art. To underscore its commitment to quality health care, VNCH has had the distinction of being ranked in the Top 25% of home health care providers nationwide since 2006. To learn more about VNCH, visit the agency's website at www.TheVisitingNurses.com.

VNCH serves the following communities: Acton, Arlington, Bedford, Belmont, Billerica, Burlington, Cambridge, Carlisle, Chelsea, Concord, Everett, Lexington, Lincoln, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Newton, Revere, Somerville, Stoneham, Wakefield, Waltham, Watertown, Wayland, Weston, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn.

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VNCH CEO Christine Dixon pictured outside of Senator John Kerry's office in Washington



VNCH CEO Christine Dixon pictured on the steps of the Supreme Court, which abuts the



Congressman Jim McGovern with VNCH CEO Christine Dixon