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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 14, 2021

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What They Are Saying: Florida's Health Care Industry Leaders Share Their Appreciation for Governor DeSantis' Freedom First Budget

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Today, leaders of Florida's health care industry shared their appreciation of Governor DeSantis' Freedom First budget recommendations that provide increases for transparency in prescription drug prices and strengthens Florida's growing health care industry. Here is what they have to say:

Beth Bowen, Executive Director of the Florida Alliance of Homecare Services, said, "The Florida Alliance of Home Care Services is proud to support Governor DeSantis and his Freedom First Budget proposal which will provide a critical rate increase for the Durable Medical Equipment providers in Florida. In light of the extreme costs increases and difficulties facing the DME industry during the public health emergency, we are grateful to Governor DeSantis for this initial show of support. Thank you for your support of the DME industry and recognition of the critical role our providers play in the cost-savings of the healthcare continuum."

Veronica Catoe, CEO of the Florida Assisted Living Association, said, "We thank Governor DeSantis for his Freedom First budget recommendations. Our nearly 600 member assisted living facilities across the state look forward to the Legislature's approach to increased funding for ALFs."

Audrey Brown, President and CEO of Florida Association of Health Plans, said, "Governor DeSantis' budget proposals are compassionately focused on care for our most vulnerable citizens while also recognizing the importance of retaining the health care workforce. The Freedom First Budget provides the necessary resources to support the successful Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program, and further enhances funding for home and community-based services so that seniors may age at home, and further supports home and community based behavioral health treatment services.

"On behalf of the Florida Association of Health Plans (FAHP), we are steadfast partners in achieving the goals set forth by our state leaders. We are grateful for the strategic approach to health care funding and the leadership demonstrated by these proposals to protect the health and well-being of Floridians. Florida's health plans share the mission of providing access to high quality health care while respecting the taxpayer dollar. We applaud the vision set forth; which is committed to Florida consumers and businesses, as well as providing overall budgetary stability as our population continues to grow."



Melanie Brown-Woofter, Florida Behavioral Health Association President and CEO, said, “The past two years have affected Floridians’ health and wellbeing in unimaginable ways. We are experiencing increases in overdoses, overdose-related deaths and suicides in every community in Florida. As the demand for mental health and addiction services continues to rise, FBHA is proud to have a Governor and a First Lady who recognize how important mental health and substance use treatment funding is. With this recommended budget, FBHA’s community behavioral health providers can continue to provide live-saving treatment services for Floridians.”

Colin Castle, Florida Chapter Chair of the Home Care Association of America, said, “Thank you Governor DeSantis for recognizing and prioritizing home care providers in the Freedom First budget. These rate increases will ensure that more Floridians can receive critical care and services in the comfort of their homes.”

Mary Mayhew, President and CEO of the Florida Hospital Association, said, “Governor DeSantis’ proposed budget continues to demonstrate his strong and effective leadership, his steady hand at the helm in support of a vibrant economy in Florida, and his consistent dedication to a robust health care delivery system ready to meet the needs of all Floridians, especially the most vulnerable served through the state Medicaid program. The Florida Hospital Association is incredibly grateful to the Governor for his visionary Freedom First budget proposal.”

Emmett Reed, Chief Executive Officer of the Florida Health Care Association, said: “FHCA applauds Governor DeSantis for creating a budget that prioritizes Florida’s long-term caregivers and the residents entrusted to their care. The \$185 million increase in Medicaid funding for nursing center residents included in the Governor’s Freedom First budget shows the importance of making meaningful investments in our long-term care facilities to help address their workforce challenges so that our state’s seniors can continue receiving the highest quality of care.”

Gail Matillo, MPA, President & CEO, Florida Senior Living Association, “Florida’s assisted living communities met and exceeded the challenge of placing seniors first during the COVID-19 pandemic, and FSLA is pleased to see Governor DeSantis continues to prioritize the needs of seniors in the Freedom First Budget. We look forward to partnering with the Governor and advocating for the needs of seniors and their communities before the Legislature.”

Steve Bahmer, LeadingAge Florida President & CEO, said, “We know the Governor was faced with a number of difficult decisions in preparing his budget proposal and we deeply appreciate his continued prioritization of seniors. Caregivers in nursing homes have done truly incredible work in serving seniors throughout the pandemic, and these resources will help ensure that Florida’s seniors continue to have access to the highest quality of care. Furthermore, investments in home and community-based services as well as affordable housing for low-income seniors can lead to considerable cost savings for the state through the delivery of necessary wraparound services. We are also grateful for the additional Alzheimer’s disease research funding, which will be critical for advancements in diagnostics, prevention and treatment of the disease.”

Bobby Lolley, RN, Executive Director of the Home Care Association of Florida, said, “The Freedom First Budget invests critically needed state dollars in Medicaid home- and community-based services. The Florida home care community commends Governor DeSantis for his leadership to protect access to high-quality, cost-effective in-home care for our state’s most vulnerable citizens.”

Justin Senior, CEO of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida, said, “The Safety Net Hospital Alliance strongly supports Governor DeSantis’ Freedom First Budget. The Governor’s budget proposes and maintains critical investments in Florida’s health care infrastructure as the state continues to beat back COVID-19. We particularly appreciate the Governor’s forward thinking on hospital directed payments and graduate medical education, as well as his strong support for the Critical Care Fund, which supports hospitals that provide the most complex care to low-income mothers and children – things like pediatric transplants, advanced neonatal intensive care, and Level 1 trauma care.”

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