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## **Illinois Budget Ax Attacks Frail Seniors in Nursing Homes**

The proposed Illinois state budget slashes Medicaid funding for seniors in nursing homes by six percent – cutting more than \$100 million from services to the sickest and frailest of Illinois citizens.

“Nursing homes are legally and ethically bound to serve clients in need,” Pat Comstock, executive director of the Health Care Council of Illinois said. “They can’t just say ‘no’ to admitting clients or providing required medical services. But the state budget cuts will inevitably endanger many of the nursing home care reforms recently passed by the legislature, such as increased nursing staff, enhanced background screening on all residents, and expanded psychiatric services, training and staff.”

Nursing home providers have already “played their part” by working with the legislature last month to tax themselves \$145 million. Using that tax, the state receives additional federal funding to support services for seniors both in the community and in nursing homes. “By cutting services for our frailest seniors, the state loses millions of dollars of additional federal funding,” Louise Bergthold, RN, president of the Illinois Council on Long Term Care said. “The state would lose as much as it is saving, while devastating services to the seniors we care for. It makes no sense, morally or fiscally.”

“Nursing homes are people serving people,” Bob Hedges, president of the Illinois Health Care Association said. “More than 70 percent of our expenses go for labor costs. These budget cuts will result in 7,000 senior care jobs being lost – at a time when Illinois citizens need their jobs. This huge budget cut is going to strike a terrible blow to our seniors, employees, families and communities.”

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*The Health Care Council of Illinois (HCCI) is a professional association of more than 500 nursing facilities committed to quality residential health care in Illinois through a productive and responsible partnership between the private and public sectors. HCCI represents more than 42,000 nursing home professionals serving more than 48,000 residents.*