



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 27, 2019

COALITION CONTACTS:
Kristen Knapp, Florida Health Care Association, kknapp@fhca.org
Dave Bruns, AARP Florida, dbruns@aarp.org
Nick Van Der Linden, LeadingAge Florida, nvanderlinden@leadingageflorida.org

Legislators, AARP, FHCA, and LeadingAge Florida Launch New Coalition for State's Seniors

TALLAHASSEE – Three of the state's leading organizations focused on the long-term care of Florida's large and growing elderly population joined forces with legislators today to announce a new coalition aimed at placing seniors at the top of the legislative priority list. AARP, the Florida Health Care Association, and LeadingAge Florida have formed the Coalition for Silver Solutions, committed to developing short- and long-term strategies to meet the health care needs of Florida's aging population.

The organizations were joined at a Capitol press conference by Sen. Ben Albritton and Rep. Rick Roth, whose home Palm Beach and Polk counties have a combined 518,000 residents age 65 and older – more than the populations of every Florida city but Jacksonville. Seniors will constitute the majority of Florida's predicted population growth between now and 2030, and this boom means Florida will encounter elder issues in a way the state has never seen before.

"One day soon, we will wake up to a Sunshine State that is grayer than almost anyplace on Earth has ever been – a place where one person in four is 65 or older and more than half of all babies will live to age 100," said Jeff Johnson, state director of AARP Florida. "Our coalition is joining together to urge Florida's leaders to prepare for this great blessing and new reality. We need a smart approach that makes the most efficient use of public resources, ensuring that we have a robust spectrum of care for older Floridians at every life stage."

Members of the Coalition for Silver Solutions have committed to advocate this year for sufficient funding for both home-based and long-term care, seeking to retain \$138 million in Medicaid funding authorized by the Legislature last year, while also working to formulate long-term strategies that will guide Florida as it deals with the unique and increasing challenges of the state's large and growing population of seniors.

The Legislature has an opportunity to make a smart decision for Florida's future by funding nursing centers and home- and community-based services in this year's budget," said Marilyn Wood, president and CEO of Opis Senior Services Group, speaking on behalf of FHCA. "At the same time, we need long-term strategies to ensure that our seniors are supported across the full spectrum of care – whether that means they can remain at home with family or community support, or when their needs become too great, our nursing centers step in to help."

-MORE-



Wood cited a recent FHCA report showing that Florida has jumped from 16th in the nation into the Top Ten in overall quality. To continue that progress, she said, the state must strongly support both home-based care and skilled nursing care for those who need it.

“We are facing a complex, multifaceted problem and any solution is going to require an equally complex set of responses,” said Steve Bahmer, President/CEO of LeadingAge Florida. “Seniors who need nursing home care tend to be older and sicker when they arrive at the nursing home than they have been in the past, and they have more complex needs. Without adequate funding, hiring and retaining the staff necessary to ensure high-quality care will continue to be a challenge. These issues are not insurmountable if the Legislature puts the money where the mandate is.”

Members of the Coalition for Silver Solutions will conduct their advocacy efforts throughout the ongoing legislative session, and will then bring leading strategists together to discuss long-term policy options. These efforts will culminate in a Silver Summit late this year, just ahead of the 2020 session.

###