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A Huge Step Forward for Disaster Planning
House Resolution 406 Passed Georgia House of Representatives

Atlanta, March 25, 2021: House Resolution 406, sponsored by Rep John LaHood (R-Valdosta), and an initiative of the Georgia Council on Aging, passed the House 167-0 this afternoon. The measure urges the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan to recognize the importance of long-term care providers and their direct care workers. The Georgia Emergency Operations Plan is the comprehensive state emergency operations plan developed to ensure mitigation, preparedness, appropriate response, and timely recovery from natural and manmade hazards that may affect residents of Georgia.

“Long-term care providers need to be able to directly and safely serve older adults and people with disabilities, consistently and effectively, even in times of disaster and emergency,” said Rep LaHood.

Dave Lamb, General Manager CareMaster Medical Services, added "Home and community-based care providers go into homes across Georgia every day to help elderly and disabled Georgians age in place. It is critical that these providers be recognized in the long-term care healthcare continuum."

Sadly, over 85 percent of COVID-19 deaths in Georgia have occurred among adults age 60 plus. There are over 1.7 million older adults in Georgia, a large number of whom live alone. When vulnerable seniors depend upon long-term care providers to help them live safely, especially in emergencies such as the current pandemic, it is critical that our state prioritize the long-term care network and recognize the full range of providers.

According to Ruth Lee, Chair of the Georgia Council on Aging (GCOA) “Older adults and people with disabilities who require services to remain independent have been challenged in finding PPE and vaccines. Many of these vulnerable individuals rely on services that cannot be performed without in-person contact.”

Some emergency planners only think of skilled nursing facilities but they represent only part of the continuum of long term care. Providers of assisted living and personal care homes, home care, home-delivered meals, and Adult Day care need a seat at the table to work with agencies that direct and administer emergency operations. Case workers with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Public Guardianship programs need to fulfill their responsibilities in a safe manner. The entire long-term support system network need representation in Georgia’s emergency planning.

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Created in 1997, the Georgia Council on Aging advises the governor, General Assembly and state agencies on issues affecting Georgia seniors. The 20-member council advocates for aging Georgians and their families and makes recommendations to lawmakers and agencies on programs for seniors.

The Coalition of Advocates for Georgia's Elderly (CO-AGE) has been advocating for the needs of the state's elderly for more than 30 years and has more than 1,000 members, statewide.