

Indiana Home Care Task Force
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Bipartisan action by the General Assembly has assured home care funding for senior citizens and persons with disabilities; Rep. Crawford, Sen. Kenley, Sen. Becker and others are cited for their leadership

(Indianapolis, IN) Today, leaders of the Indiana Home Care Task Force praised bipartisan action by the members of the General Assembly to fully fund the state's CHOICE home care program. During the regular and special sessions of the General Assembly, legislative leaders and members consistently backed spending provisions in the state budget act, HEA 1001(ss), that called for no cuts in the CHOICE program. That resulted in an appropriation for CHOICE of \$48,765,643 for each year of the new two year budget period. The CHOICE In-Home Services Program funds a wide array of home care services for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. The program is widely credited with reducing the state's reliance on far more expensive nursing home care.

The General Assembly also passed SEA 438, which restored the major provisions of the historic home care reform act passed by the legislature in 2003. The original 2003 act is commonly referred to as 493. Combined with the CHOICE funding provisions in HEA 1001(ss), advocates for senior citizens and persons with disabilities felt praise was due for members of the General Assembly.

John Cardwell, chairperson of the Task Force and president of Hoosiers First, cited several legislators for their leadership in securing funding for the CHOICE program. "Rep. **Bill Crawford** (D - Indianapolis) in the House, and Senators **Luke Kenley** (R - Noblesville) and **Vaneta Becker** (R - Evansville) in the upper chamber, led the General Assembly in supporting full funding for the CHOICE program. These lawmakers asked for direct evidence of the effectiveness of CHOICE in humanely serving seniors and persons with disabilities, and in protecting taxpayers from the higher cost of care incurred by the Medicaid program when people are inappropriately placed in nursing homes. With that evidence in hand, they worked with their colleagues to assure funding for CHOICE."

Elmer Blankenship, president of the Indiana Alliance for Retired Americans, noted: "The CHOICE success story during a time of tight public spending demonstrates the importance of engaging ordinary citizens in the shaping of state policies. Citizens all over Indiana articulated the need for CHOICE services and legislators responding accordingly. We can now take courage that the next two years will provide a opportunity to better serve Hoosiers who need long term care. CHOICE, when combined with Medicaid programs that also serve people who need and want home and community based care, gives us the opportunity to build a long term care system in Indiana that is based on affordable quality care, consumer rights, and the smart use of tax dollars."

Michelle Niemier, executive director of United Senior Action of Indiana, added: "By fully funding CHOICE, the General Assembly has made it clear that Indiana and its citizens are better served when people can get the quality home care they need and when they need it. We look forward to working with the state's Division of Aging and the Area Agencies on Aging over the next two

years to take full advantage of the opportunity the legislature has given us. More individuals and families can now plan for the home care services they need and fewer Hoosiers will have to live with the fear of being forced into an institution. This appropriation for CHOICE moves us closer to a balanced system of long term care. We are grateful to the General Assembly for that."

The Task Force leaders cited other members of the General Assembly who played significant roles in securing funding for CHOICE and the passage of SEA 438 including **Senator Vaneta Becker (R - Evansville)**, **Rep. Charlie Brown (D - Gary)**, **House Speaker Pat Bauer (D - South Bend)**, **Rep. Jeff Espich (R - Uniondale)**, **Senator John Broden (D - South Bend)**, **Rep. Dennis Avery (D - Evansville)**, and **Sen. Patricia Miller (R - Indianapolis)**.

John Cardwell concluded: "The vast majority of the General Assembly played a critical role in supporting CHOICE, and SEA 438, which restores critical components of Indiana's historic 2003 home and community based services reform act, SEA 493. SEA 438 was authored by Sen. **Vaneta Becker** and sponsored by Rep. **Charlie Brown**. Combined, the new funding for CHOICE and the restoration of SEA 493, keeps Indiana on track to re-balance its public investment between home care and institutional care. Over time, this will establish a full array of services for seniors, persons with disabilities, and families while protecting and expanding the rights of persons who need long term care."