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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**71 PERCENT OF FLORIDA VOTERS OPPOSE  
MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT CUTS TO HOSPITALS, NEW POLL SHOWS**

*Voters fear loss of specialized healthcare services that benefit all, view Medicaid favorably*

**TALLAHASSEE, FL, February 6, 2011** – Seventy-one percent of Florida voters say Medicaid is an important program that should be maintained and oppose the deep reimbursement cuts to Florida's hospitals that Governor Rick Scott and legislative leaders are proposing this session, a new poll shows.

Voters say they are most concerned that additional reimbursement cuts will force hospitals to eliminate specialized healthcare services such as trauma care, advanced care for newborn babies, burn units and outpatient clinics.

The poll also found that 72 percent of voters oppose Governor Scott's proposal to reduce the number of days that Medicaid patients can be hospitalized annually from 45 to 23 days. After 23 days, hospitals would no longer receive Medicaid reimbursement for these patients.

The poll of 800 registered Florida voters was conducted January 9-13 on behalf of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida (SNHAF) by Hill + Knowlton Strategies. SNHAF advocates on behalf of the state's 15 flagship teaching, children's and public hospitals. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percent.

Additionally, the poll found that 59 percent of voters oppose plans to cut Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals in order to balance the state budget. Floridians hold favorable views of the Medicaid program by a two-to-one margin, with 56 percent of voters saying they view favorably the federal-state program that currently provides health coverage to 3.3 million state residents, including the elderly and disabled, women and children, and working poor Florida families.

"Florida voters clearly don't support the deep Medicaid reimbursement cuts to hospitals that are being proposed by elected leaders in Tallahassee and they understand that these cuts will negatively affect the quality of healthcare for all Floridians," said Tony Carvalho, the president of SNHAF. "Additionally, voters recognize the important role that Medicaid plays in ensuring that some of Florida's most vulnerable citizens receive quality healthcare, especially in light of the deep recession that forced more people into Medicaid."

The SNHAF poll closely tracks the results of two other statewide polls conducted earlier this month that also found voters overwhelmingly oppose deep Medicaid reimbursement cuts to hospitals. A Florida Hospital Association poll found that 75 percent of voters said it would be unacceptable to cut Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals as a way to address the state budget deficit. Meanwhile, a Quinnipiac University poll found that 67 percent of voters oppose cutting Medicaid funding in order to increase state education funding.

**(More)**

## **71 percent of voters oppose Medicaid cuts to hospitals**

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Governor Scott's budget proposal for 2012-13 calls for increasing public school funding by \$1 billion, largely by cutting Medicaid reimbursements for healthcare services that hospitals have already provided to the elderly, disabled and working poor families. In total, Governor Scott is proposing about \$1.4 billion in Medicaid reimbursement cuts to hospitals statewide – and nearly \$825 million of those cuts, or 57 percent, would fall on just the 15 safety net hospital systems that are members of SNHAF.

The Florida House's budget proposal is an improvement over the Governor's plan. The House has proposed cutting Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals by 7 percent this year, or roughly \$393 million. However, when combined with the 12.5 percent Medicaid rate cut that was enacted by the Legislature last spring, Florida's hospitals would see Medicaid reimbursements slashed by nearly 20 percent in just two years under the House plan. The Florida Senate has not yet released its budget plan for the coming year, but hospitals are bracing for additional deep proposed cuts in the upper chamber too.

Over the past seven years, Florida's hospitals have seen Medicaid reimbursements cut by about \$1 billion as state legislators grappled with budget deficits.

In the SNHAF poll, 71 percent of voters said Medicaid is a costly but important program that should be maintained, while only 23 percent said that the Medicaid program had grown too large and should be cut significantly, even if it meant that some recipients will lose the care they need.

Voters were also asked if they favor or oppose plans to reduce state reimbursements to hospitals that help pay for healthcare services provided to the poor and uninsured in order to balance the state budget. Fifty-nine percent of voters said they opposed such a move – with 42 percent strongly opposed – and 33 percent favored the plan.

When asked what would concern them most if proposed Medicaid cuts to hospitals were approved by the Legislature, 30 percent of voters worried that hospitals would be forced to cut specialized healthcare services, 20 percent cited a potential increase in commercial health insurance premiums if hospitals were forced to shift costs to private insurers, and 18 percent said they were concerned that local taxes that help pay for healthcare services for the poor and uninsured could increase.

"Florida's safety net hospitals provide a wide range of highly specialized healthcare services that benefit everyone in their communities – not just the poor and uninsured – and voters understand this," Carvalho added. "Hospitals acknowledge that our elected leaders have faced very difficult choices in balancing the state budget without increasing taxes during these tough economic times, but hospitals have sustained more than their fair share of cuts, and voters recognize hospitals can't take anymore. They also recognize that more cuts could lead to a cost shift to small businesses due to increases in private health insurance costs. We are hopeful and confident that elected leaders take note of the results of these recent polls and follow the will of their constituents as they finalize the state budget over the next few weeks."

(Attached is a compilation of questions asked on the SNHAF poll, and the responses from voters.)

## SNHAF SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

Attached is a compilation of the survey questions asked and the results from a poll conducted January 9-13, 2012 on behalf of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida. The poll, conducted by Hill + Knowlton Strategies, had a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percent.

As you may know, Florida, like many other states, is facing a budget deficit and is reducing funding to several state agencies and programs in order to balance the state budget without raising taxes. Governor Rick Scott and some lawmakers have proposed extensive budget cuts to area hospitals since they receive significant state reimbursements after they provide care to the poor and uninsured. Knowing this...

1. Do you favor or oppose a plan to reduce state reimbursements to hospitals for healthcare services they provide to the poor and uninsured in order to help balance the state budget?

%	
15	Strongly favor
18	Somewhat favor
2	<i>Neither (vol.)</i>
17	Somewhat oppose
42	Strongly oppose
5	Don't know (vol.)
1	Refused (vol.)
	<b><u>Collapsed</u></b>
33	Favor
59	Oppose

2. Which of the following concerns you most if proposed state budget cuts to hospitals in Florida are approved?

### *ROTATE FIRST THREE STATEMENTS*

%	
12	Hospitals will be forced to lay off employees
30	Hospitals will be forced to cut specialized services such as trauma care, advanced care for newborn babies, burn units and outpatient clinics
20	People with private health insurance will see their premiums increase as hospitals shift more costs to private insurers
18	Local taxes that help pay for healthcare for the poor and uninsured could increase
10	All (vol.)
3	None (vol.)
7	Don't know (vol.)

3. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

### *ROTATE STATEMENTS*

%	
71	Medicaid is a costly but important program that serves people who cannot afford healthcare; it should be maintained.
23	Medicaid has grown too large and the program should be cut significantly, even if it means some recipients will lose care that they need.
5	Don't know (vol.)
1	Refused (vol.)

4. As part of his 2012-2013 budget proposal, Governor Scott is proposing to reduce the number of days that Medicaid patients can be hospitalized annually from 45 to 23 days. After 23 days, hospitals would no longer receive Medicaid reimbursement for these patients. Do you support or oppose this proposal? And would you say you strongly [support/oppose]?

%	
12	Strongly support
13	Somewhat support
1	Neither (vol.)
16	Somewhat oppose
56	Strongly oppose
4	Don't know (vol.)
1	Refused (vol.)
	<b><u>Collapsed</u></b>
25	Support
72	Oppose