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McGreevey Creates Seniors' "Bill Of Rights"

Executive Order Ensures Seniors Have Choices for Care in their Golden Years

(WILDWOOD) — At the Fall AARP conference today, Governor James E. McGreevey signed an Executive Order creating a seniors' "Bill of Rights" to support the independence, dignity and choice of citizens as they age.

"Last Spring, we set forth fundamental change for the long term care of our senior citizens," said Governor McGreevey. "We enabled the State to provide, for the first time ever, the flexibility needed to allow more seniors to live with dignity at home, or with a relative, and still receive the money the state had earmarked for their long term care. Today, I am proud to fulfill yet another promise of that order. By creating a 'Bill of Rights,' we empower seniors with the assurance that the State recognizes seniors and caregivers should have a range of care choices and that the State will foster and promote alternatives to nursing homes."

Executive Order #136 creates, for the first time, a "Bill of Rights" that establishes a clear policy that seniors and caregivers should have a range of care choices. It also requires the state to foster and promote alternatives to nursing homes. This "Bill of Rights" is part of the Governor's Long Term Care initiative created last Spring, which included provisions enabling a new "Money Follows the Person" program; a streamlined paperwork process to fast track eligible participants into long term care programs; and expanded Adult Family Care programs to offer more seniors the option to live in a home-like setting.

Today's signing further expands Governor McGreevey's commitment to improving the quality of life for New Jersey's seniors. The Governor has already signed into law two of AARP's top legislative priorities, two of the strongest bills of their kind in the nation — "Do Not Call" and the "Anti-Predatory Lending."

The Administration also made great strides with key assistance programs, such as the

recently enacted "Universal Service Fund," which AARP calls "the nation's best energy assistance program." The Governor also kept his core promise of fully funding PAAD, the nation's best prescription drug program, without raising prescription costs and without reducing the eligibility of participants.

This spring, Governor McGreevey also tackled the property tax crisis, bringing immediate relief to seniors, and laying the foundation for long-term reform. He created and passed the FAIR plan, which provided immediate relief by increasing the Homestead Rebate from \$750 to \$1,200. McGreevey also reopened the senior property tax freeze program.

Below is the text of Executive Order #136, creating a seniors' Bill of Rights:

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 136

WHEREAS, New Jersey is a state where independence, dignity and choice is fostered to support residents as they age; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey must prepare to meet the individual and societal needs of our adult population and their families as they grow older; and

WHEREAS, government, for too long, has denied older adults the right to choose where they receive services if public sector funding is paying for the needed care; and

WHEREAS, policy changes are essential to support an expanding elderly population that desires to stay at home with supports in the caring community of New Jersey versus going into a nursing home; and

WHEREAS, caregiving by unpaid family or friends has become an important issue because so many New Jerseyans are finding themselves or will find themselves in the role of caregiver for a loved one; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey must support innovative and cost-effective initiatives for services and programs that are responsive to the unique needs of a growing corps of volunteer

caregivers and a diminishing workforce of paid caregivers; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey encourages a society free of ageism and the stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old, specifically by protecting older adults' right to work, a decent retirement, protective services when vulnerable and end-of-life care with dignity; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey recognizes that older adults are respected members of the community and provide an invaluable resource of social, cultural, historic and spiritual enrichment and leadership; and

WHEREAS, in Executive Order No. 100 (2004), I called upon the Department of Health and Senior Services to develop a home and community health care "bill of rights" to support New Jersey's aging population;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JAMES E. MCGREEVEY, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. The State of New Jersey hereby recognizes a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities to support the independence, dignity and choice of citizens as they age. This Bill of Rights and Responsibilities safeguards the following:

- (a) freedom, independence and individual initiative in planning and managing their own lives; and
- (b) full participation in the planning and operation of community-based services and programs for their benefit; and
- (c) access to viable, affordable and cost-effective services

- and programs that are molded by the principles of strengthening independence, affirming dignity and expanding choice; and
- (d) the ability to remain in their communities and in their homes with the support of community-based, long-term care services; and
 - (e) a system where long-term care needs are met, regardless of income, in a culturally and linguistically sensitive way as they change over time; and
 - (f) access to public and private services, allowing aging in place where possible, and the ability to transition between the various forms of long-term care with minimal disruption and maximum attention to quality of life; and
 - (g) an opportunity to choose a healthy lifestyle, and be supported in this choice by effective, culturally appropriate programs designed to foster health and wellness without regard to economic status; and
 - (h) support for family members and other persons providing voluntary care, known as caregiving, to older individuals needing long-term care services; and
 - (i) a community where greater choice, control and flexibility are built into a progressive system of assistance for older and disabled individuals, families, friends and neighbors; and
 - (j) protection against abuse, neglect and exploitation in the community and in health care settings; and
 - (k) consumer empowerment to make informed quality of life decisions; and

(1) a long-term care system that is visible, trusted and easy to access for both information and assistance by all communities in New Jersey.

2. This Order shall take effect immediately.

this
September

GIVEN, under my hand and seal
27thday of

in the Year of Our Lord,
Two Thousand and Four, and
of the Independence of the
United States, the Two
Hundred and Twenty-Ninth.

James E. McGreevey
Governor

Attest:

Mark J. Fleming
Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor

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