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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 7, 2010

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AARP Urges Bi-Partisan Support for Home Health Companion Bills *Essential to Ensuring Consumer Access to High Quality Providers*

WASHINGTON—AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeaMond issued the following statement regarding AARP's endorsement of the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2010, H.R. 4993 and S. 2814. The bills, sponsored by Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D- Pa.) and Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) will improve home health care access for people in Medicare by authorizing more providers to order these services:

“AARP is committed to ensuring that consumers have access to health care providers who are qualified, educated, and certified to provide high quality primary care, chronic care management, and other services that keep them live a high quality life, with dignity, in locations of their choice.

“For the vast majority of older Americans, that location is home. A recent AARP study found that nine in 10 Americans want to stay in their current residence for as long as possible. However, current law does not allow nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse-midwives and physician assistants to order home health care services for the patients they serve. This means that homebound patients are unable to receive needed home care services until the orders are signed by a physician and faxed to the Medicare Certified Home Health Agency, and can result in patients being hospitalized while home care is delayed. Timely home health services can help keep people in their homes and out of more costly care settings.

“The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2010 addresses this by helping to ensure consumers have direct access to home health referrals from their choice of providers. It authorizes nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other providers to order home health care services and reimburses them through Medicare.

“Decades of data demonstrate that nurse practitioners provide high quality care to people of all ages, including people in Medicare. The majority of nurse practitioners practice in primary care and twenty percent practice in rural areas. These advanced practice registered nurses often are the only care providers available in areas with health professional shortages.

“AARP endorses the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2010 because it will improve home health care access for people in Medicare, allowing them to stay in their homes for as long as possible. We will continue to work with Congress to pass this important legislation.”

For more information on nursing issues and how they impact consumer health care, visit the Center to Champion Nursing in America (www.championnursing.org), an initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.1 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's millions of members and Americans 50+; AARP VIVA su Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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