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## **Community Comes Together to Support Funding of Quality Care for the Elderly**

**Cleveland** — Thousands of people could be left out in the cold, under state budget plans for Medicaid funding proposed by Governor Ted Strickland. That's why nursing home caregivers, residents, volunteers, and family members, representing nearly 2,300 residents at 6 area non-profit nursing (Eliza Bryant, Eliza Jennings, Jennings Center for Older Adults, Menorah Park, Montefiore and St. Augustine Health Campus), gathered in front of St. Augustine Health Campus, on Wednesday, April 22. Holding banners and signs, hundreds of people protested the Governor's proposed \$112.2 million budget reduction in Medicaid funding to nursing home residents and the increased bed tax.

The issue of fair and adequate funding for those who need the nursing home care is not only a budgetary issue, but a moral issue. Individuals and a society are judged by how well they care for the least. The decisions of this budget affect people's lives and their quality of life.

Charlie O'Fahey, a nursing home resident poses this question to the Legislators, "If your mom or wife was in a nursing home, what would you cut in light of the ever tight budget? A nurse? A nursing assistant? What program, service or activity is not really needed and makes the nursing home "inefficient?"

The rally brought people together – old and young, wealthy and poor, Jewish and Christian, from East and West – to take a stand for those who built this country. "We owe it to them to provide them with the very best in care and services – not the kind of care the government suggests with each budget that cuts funding or keeps nursing home funding "flat", said Dana Carns, Development Director of St. Augustine.

Although we are excited about the revised budget *proposed* by the House, which will keep Medicaid reimbursements flat as they have been for the past 5 years, we know that the fight is not over. Nursing Home reimbursement is always on the chopping block and yet more and more people with many more complex medical needs are in need of skilled nursing care. We are standing up for Quality Care for the over 23,000 living in nursing homes just in N.E. Ohio (7 county's). Quality takes money. Stella, a resident from Eliza Jennings summed it up in the last two lines of a poem she wrote: "What if you were in OUR fix? Would your cuts pass the test?"

Please take a look at the faces of those who your decisions will impact. A short video is attached.