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**Statement by N.A.C.H. President & CEO Lawrence McAndrews on President's State of the Union Address to the Nation**

(Alexandria, VA) — Tonight when President Obama gives his State of the Union Address before Congress and the nation, we can expect to hear the president focus on the accomplishments of the past year in addition to his priorities for this legislative year.

When speaking about the historic health care legislation he signed into law, the president will likely point to health care coverage provisions that are already benefiting Americans such as the ones that enable children to stay on their parents' health insurance until age 26; exempt them from lifetime caps under private insurance; and prevent private insurers from denying them coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions.

The National Association of Children's Hospitals (N.A.C.H.) supports these provisions and urges Congress and the Administration to build on them by taking steps this year to ensure children's timely access to pediatric care.

One such step is the reauthorization of Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME), a federally funded program that enables children's hospitals to sustain and strengthen their teaching programs. Nationwide, the CHGME program now accounts for 40 percent of the training in general pediatrics and 66 percent of the growth in the pediatric specialty training.

Another equally important step is protecting Medicaid funding from drastic cuts at the federal level. When Congress turns its attention to entitlement programs it must not forget the majority of Medicaid enrollees are children; Medicaid is the single largest payer of children's health care; and children's hospitals devote half their patient care to children on Medicaid. Cutting Medicaid may help reduce the federal deficit but it will surely weaken the pediatric health care system and children's hospitals' ability to serve all children.

Like everyone else in this nation, children's hospitals, their patients and families are looking to the president and Congress for leadership and solutions to the most pressing problems facing this country. From my perspective, there is no more pressing issue than the health care needs of children—the future of this nation.

The National Association of Children's Hospitals (N.A.C.H.) is the public policy affiliate of the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions. Representing more than 140 freestanding acute care children's hospitals, freestanding children's rehabilitation and specialty hospitals, and children's hospitals organized within larger medical centers, N.A.C.H. addresses public policy issues affecting children's hospitals' missions of service to the children of their communities, including clinical care, education, research and advocacy.