

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Ashley Glacel

October 6, 2010

Phone: 202.224.5364

CMS ISSUES GRANT FUNDING TO SIX STATES BASED ON KOHL LAW TO BETTER PROTECT ELDERLY

Kohl Encourages Other States to Apply for Grant Funding to Help Keep Predators Out of Long-Term Care Workforce

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI), Chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, announced that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued the first wave of grant funding to six states for the purpose of better protecting long-term care residents. Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Missouri and Rhode Island will receive a total of \$14 million in guaranteed federal funding over three years to create comprehensive, streamlined systems for conducting background checks on those who seek to work with vulnerable seniors in any long-term care setting. Other states will have another opportunity to apply for these funds through CMS later this month.

“More states should take advantage of this grant funding, and I am thankful to CMS for extending the deadline in order to allow that to happen,” Kohl said. “We have a great deal of hard evidence that background checks for long-term care workers protects lives, and I urge CMS to take a proactive role in providing states with assistance they need to expand and improve their background check screening systems.”

The health reform legislation signed into law in March created the grant program to prevent those with criminal histories and a record of abuse from working within long-term care settings by assisting states in the creation of a comprehensive nationwide system of background checks. The program is based on the Patient Safety and Abuse Prevention Act (S. 631), policy that was consistently championed by Senator Kohl and was embedded in Title VI, Part III, Subtitle C, Section 6201 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

While a vast majority of long-term care workers are caring and dedicated individuals, thousands of people with a history of substantiated abuse or a criminal record are hired every year to work closely with frail seniors within our nation’s nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Because the current system of background checks is haphazard, inconsistent, and full of gaping holes in many states, predators can easily evade detection during the hiring process, securing jobs that allow them to assault, abuse, and steal from defenseless elders.

To stop this abuse, the provisions included in health reform expand a highly successful pilot program in seven states that was spearheaded by Kohl and authorized under the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act. That pilot program was found to prevent more than 7,000 applicants with a history of substantiated abuse or a violent criminal record from being hired to work with – and potentially prey upon – frail elders and individuals with disabilities receiving long-term care services. In addition to providing funding for states to establish coordinated systems that include

checks against multiple abuse and neglect registries and a state police check, the policy also requires that applicants be checked against the FBI's national database of criminal history records.

#

For more information on the CMS background check grant program, click here:
http://www.cms.gov/SurveyCertificationGenInfo/04_BackgroundCheck.asp

A link to the Committee's 2008 print on background checks is available here:
<http://aging.senate.gov/letters/bcreport.pdf>

A link to the executive summary of the Committee's 2008 print is available here:
<http://aging.senate.gov/letters/bcreportexecsummary.pdf>