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### **Statement for the Record**

#### **“The Future of Long-Term Care Policy: Continuing the Conversation” Senate Special Committee on Aging December 18, 2013**

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) is pleased to submit these comments to the Senate Special Committee on Aging concerning the future of long-term care policy in our nation. Consumer Voice is a national non-profit organization that advocates on behalf of long-term care consumers across care settings. Our membership consists primarily of consumers of long-term care and services, their families, long-term care ombudsmen, individual advocates, and citizen advocacy groups. Consumer Voice has over 38 years experience advocating for quality care.

We thank the Committee for holding this hearing to examine ways to improve access to and the affordability of long-term care in the United States. The federal Commission on Long-Term Care’s report to Congress serves as a wake-up call to the urgent need to improve the delivery and financing of long-term services and supports (LTSS) in our nation. The Consumer Voice supports the broad recommendations made by this body and commends the work of the commissioners in putting forth a final report. However, we are concerned that the recommendations fail to include a concrete plan for the reform of America’s inadequate long-term care system. This result is not surprising since Congress rushed the development of a commission that had only 100 days to discuss numerous concerns surrounding the payment and provision of long-term care in our nation and come to agreement upon recommendations.

Despite the obvious limitations of the final report, such as the lack of any prospective structure that would allow consumers to better finance long-term services and supports and very little attention given to quality of life and quality of care concerns, Consumer Voice supports many of the Commission’s proposals, such as:

- The better inclusion of family caregivers in LTSS systems
- The establishment of a competent and adequately sized LTSS workforce through career ladders
- The requirement of criminal background checks for all long-term care workers

- Elimination of the 3-day hospital stay requirement for skilled nursing facility coverage under Medicare
- Reconsideration of the requirement for receiving home health services under Medicare that the individual be "homebound."

Many of these recommendations would be important steps towards improving long-term care in our nation.

Consumer Voice also expresses particular support for the minority report released by Judy Feder, Judith Stein, Laphonza Butler, Henry Claypool, and Lynnae Rutledge of the commission. We agree that a public social insurance program that can be easily understood and navigated by consumers should serve as the core of any effective long-term care system.

We urge members of the Committee to advocate for the creation of a permanent advisory committee or council to build on the momentum created by the Commission's work. An ongoing committee is needed to delve deeper into long-term care issues and build a system that is affordable and ensures that each consumer reaches his or her highest level of well-being in a setting of his/her choice. We believe that at a minimum such a system must include the following elements:

- Standards supporting quality of life and quality of care
- Strong consumer rights and protections
- Consumer choice and direction; accommodation of needs and preferences
- Well-trained, well-supervised and adequate numbers of direct care workers
- An independent, effective ombudsman program across all long-term care settings

We hope today's hearing will serve as a call to action. It is time for Congress to make affordable, quality long-term services and supports a financial and political priority.

*The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.*