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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NJ Senator James Beach Advocates for Special Needs Child

Stratford, NJ – July 21, 2011 - When Dale Blunt, RN, placed her three year old patient Amelia Rivera of Stratford, NJ into the welcoming arms of New Jersey Senator James Beach (D-6), the little girl looked around at her mother, her father, her nurse, and back again at Senator Beach, not quite knowing why this man she had never met had come to her home.

However, Amelia's parents, Chrissy and Joseph Rivera, knew perfectly well why Senator Beach had taken time out of his busy schedule to stop in and visit with them, and were extremely grateful that he agreed to help them maintain their desperately-needed medical coverage for their daughter.

"Amelia was born with a rare genetic disorder called Wolf-Hirschhorne Syndrome (WHS)," explained Kimberly Flynn, RN, a clinical manager with Bayada Nurses, a national home care company with offices serving children with special needs in Camden County. "She is unable to sit up on her own, crawl, or talk. In addition, she gets her nutrition through a feeding tube, has hearing and vision issues, and has recently developed cardiac problems."

Amelia had been attending a day care program specializing in caring for medically fragile children, however, she frequently became sick, and her parents felt she would do better at home. Chrissy Rivera, a teacher, and Joseph Rivera, a realtor, had great difficulty juggling their full-time jobs, Amelia's two older brothers, and the extensive care required for their little girl.

"Fortunately, Bayada was able to provide 16 hours of nursing care a day, taking a tremendous strain off of the family and giving them peace of mind," shared Flynn. "But now, with uncertainty about Amelia's insurance coverage, that nursing care may be threatened."

According to Flynn, Amelia's nursing is reimbursed by the state-funded Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment, (EPSDT) Program, which is part of the NJ FamilyCare Medicaid program. This month, Amelia's coverage will be transferred to an HMO, and her parents worry that the change could result in a reduction of her nursing hours.

The Riveras are no strangers to fighting for their daughter's health care. It took them two years to obtain medical coverage from Medicaid for Amelia, who was categorized as lower maintenance.

"Medicaid felt that because my daughter did not need a tracheostomy tube and ventilator to breathe, that she did not need as many nursing hours as other children," shared Chrissy Rivera. "Now I'm afraid that the HMO will place her in the same category, and threaten to reduce her nursing hours. I feel she is needy enough!"

Indeed, after meeting little Amelia, Senator Beach agreed. Although he was not aware of any managed care companies denying or reducing coverage for children who are considered lower maintenance, he promised to look into the matter, and connected the Riveras with a colleague who is an expert in legislative healthcare issues.

Medicaid had also covered the cost of some of Amelia's co-pays, a benefit that the Rivera family will lose when they are transferred to the private HMO plan.

"There was a line item in the budget that would have helped with this issue, but it was vetoed by Governor Christie," said the Senator, speaking about the new budget. "It is a balancing act. We have to be concerned about the taxpayer, but not at the expense of the most vulnerable members of our population."

For more information on pediatric home care services, call Bayada Nurses at 856-772-6565.

Founded in 1975 by J. Mark Baiada, Bayada Nurses provides nursing, rehabilitative, therapeutic, hospice, and personal home health care services to children, adults, and seniors in the comfort of their own homes. More than 13,000 nurses, home health aides, therapists, and social workers care for clients in 20 states from more than 190 offices. For more information, visit www.bayada.com or www.youtube.com/bayadanurses.



Pictured from left to right, standing, are Dale Blunt, RN, Kimberly Flynn, RN clinical manager, Chrissy Rivera, and Joseph Rivera. Sitting is Senator James Beach holding Amelia Rivera.