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## News for Immediate Release

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### **Auditor General DePasquale: State Improves Nursing Home Oversight, But Action Needed Now to Prepare for Wave of Older Adults**

**HARRISBURG** – In a special report following up on his 2016 audit of oversight of nursing homes by the state Department of Health (DOH), Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today warned that Pennsylvania is ill-prepared to serve a fast-growing population of older adults.

“Right now, there are nearly 90,000 Pennsylvanians living in more than 700 nursing homes,” DePasquale said. “Not only can Pennsylvania do a better job in ensuring the safety of today’s older adults, but we must also get ready for the huge numbers of people who will need care in the not-so-distant future.”

DePasquale’s 2016 audit cited issues at DOH with inadequate review of nurse staffing levels, complaint handling, and sanctions imposed against poor-performing facilities. It contained 13 findings and 23 recommendations.

His new special report, “[Who Will Care for Mom & Dad?](#)” was developed to see how the Department of Health has implemented the audit’s recommendations. It contains nine observations and 30 recommendations.

“My team and I spoke with more than 50 experts for this report, and we heard from more than 20 nursing home residents, families and staff members about their experiences,” DePasquale said. “While much of what we heard was encouraging, we also heard about serious challenges such as staffing, equipment and supply shortages.”

The report suggests the Department of Health must adopt thorough, clearly outlined policies for vetting nursing home operators.

“We found at least one case where lax vetting processes resulted in granting a license to a financially unstable operator who had a poor quality track record in another jurisdiction,” DePasquale said.

In addition, the report urges DOH to produce better data to offer a clearer picture of which homes are truly improving. While DOH has shown progress holding homes accountable by increasing fines for care deficiencies, a recent decline in the use of provisional licenses as a means of encouraging operators to improve care requires further monitoring.

The report also calls for stronger collaboration between state agencies to prepare for the large wave of Baby Boomers, some of whom may not have spouses or children to help them as they age.

“By 2040, nearly a quarter of Pennsylvania’s population will be 65 or older,” DePasquale said. “That’s over 3 million Pennsylvanians who will likely need some kind of care, many of whom may lack personal financial resources or family support and end up relying on taxpayer-funded programs like Medicaid.”

DePasquale said shortages of registered nurses and direct care workers will only worsen if prompt action is not taken to bolster the elder care workforce.

“By 2030, there will be 38 older adult dependents for every working-age resident,” DePasquale said. “At about the same time, Pennsylvania is projected to be short by thousands of registered nurses and tens of thousands of direct-care workers – creating a looming workforce crisis that must be addressed.”

DePasquale said a failure to prepare will create new costs that will burden families and impact the state’s economic growth. He called on colleges and universities to help develop solutions.

“Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education and community colleges across the state should view this healthcare workforce crisis as an opportunity to grow,” he added. “The public and private sectors, along with labor organizations and educators, must work together to recruit and prepare more professionals to enter the field and nurture the next generation of healthcare workers.”

DePasquale commended the Department of Health and Dr. Rachel Levine, Secretary of Health, for cooperating with his review and working to implement the recommendations from his 2016 audit.

Review the special report, “[Who Will Care for Mom & Dad?](#)”, and learn more about the Department of the Auditor General online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov).

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