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Florida Association of Children's Hospitals to Legislature: Don't Cut Our Capacity to Care for Children

Tallahassee, Fla. – The Florida Association of Children's Hospitals (FACH) today released the following statement from its Executive Director, Dana Ferrell Birchfield, in response to budget cuts proposed by the Florida Legislature:

"We are extremely concerned that not only is the Florida Legislature proposing more than \$500 million in total cuts to all Florida hospitals reimbursed by Medicaid, but also that more than \$250 million will be taken from funding for pediatric and neonatal services.

"Parents who search to find the best treatment and the highest quality of care often turn to one of Florida's renowned children's hospitals. These are the facilities that provide the majority of hospital care to newborns and children and 72 percent of all inpatient hospital care for children 17 and younger. They operate 98 percent of pediatric transplant programs and 98 percent of pediatric open-heart surgery programs in the state. Most also operate a Level I, Level II or pediatric trauma center, and several are considered major teaching hospitals, recognized for providing hands-on training for future generations of pediatric nurses, doctors and surgeons. Yet these are the hospitals targeted for more than half the cuts.

"Also concerning is the rationale given for the cuts, which we fear demonstrates a lack of understanding of the dire situation children's hospitals are in because they are treating disproportionately high numbers of Medicaid patients at low reimbursement rates. And supplemental Medicaid financing programs may allow hospitals to use funds to bridge the difference between Medicaid reimbursements and their costs of providing the care, but these programs are not permanent funding sources.

"Clearly, a child's health is a huge contributor not just to surviving, but to thriving. We urge the Florida Legislature not to cut our children's hospitals' capacity to care for their young patients."

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