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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Governor Signs Landmark Legislation Protecting Medically Fragile Children in School** BAYADA Home Health Care and Loving Care Agency Form Coalition to Advocate for Children

Moorestown, NJ – May 14, 2012 – On May 3, Governor Chris Christie signed into law landmark legislation designed to protect medically fragile students and allow parents a choice in care providers for their children during the school day. The law is effective immediately.

The new law, sponsored by Senator James Beach (D-Camden) Senator Joseph Vitale (D-Middlesex), Assemblyman Daniel Benson (D-Mercer, Middlesex) Assemblyman Herb Conaway (D-Burlington), Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz (R-Morris, Somerset, Union), and Assemblyman Troy Singleton, (D-Burlington), requires that a provider of clinical nursing services to a medically fragile student meet the same certification standards that are required by the New Jersey Department of Human Services for Medicaid and the New Jersey Family Care program for clinical nurses. Additionally, the law will allow for the parent or guardian of the medically fragile student to choose the provider of the clinical nursing service as long as it would not increase costs for the school district. The law came to fruition thanks to a coalition formed by BAYADA Home Health Care and Loving Care Agency, who worked for over a year with the Department of Education and state legislators to advocate on behalf of families of children with special needs.

“Parents of students with serious health conditions and who need constant care and attention should be confident that the care their child is receiving at school is at least comparable to the care that they receive at home,” said Senator Beach.

Senator Vitale added, “By allowing the parents to choose the nurse who will be with their child during the school day, we will provide consistency of care for this child, and provide the parents with a sense of ease that their child is not at serious risk at school.”

BAYADA President Mark Baiada expressed his appreciation to Governor Christie, the Senate, and the Assembly for their unanimous support, hailing this law as a victory for children with special needs and their families.

“The Governor and the New Jersey legislature have made it possible to help parents and their children feel confident that the care they receive in the school will be provided at a higher standard, by nurses who possess the critical skills needed to ensure these children are safe,” said Baiada. “We will continue to work to set the bar higher and serve as an advocate to ensure our clients receive the best possible care.”

Loving Care Agency President and CEO Bob Creamer emphasized the importance of safety as the driving force behind this new law.

“If a negative incident occurred as a result of a student receiving care from a nurse who lacked the necessary skills or experience, the effect on the student, family, nurse, and local school district could be devastating,” said Creamer. “If this law prevents even one such incident, then our efforts made it all worthwhile.”

According to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, local school districts are responsible for providing free, appropriate public education to all students with disabilities.

Isaiah Sutter, 9, of Collingswood, who has cerebral palsy and epilepsy, often experiences seizures that can cause him to stop breathing. He goes to school accompanied by nurses who have extensive training to handle life-threatening situations. Last year, his mother, Amy Welsh, learned she would no longer have input in choosing the nurses who would care for her son during the school day.

“As a mother, how can I be sure that a nurse who is hired by someone else has the skills needed to save my child’s life?” said Welsh, who, along with Jennifer Weber, mother of a daughter with cerebral palsy and epilepsy, testified in front of the Assembly and the Senate, who unanimously passed the bill in March.

Weber’s daughter, Jessica, 12, of Haddon Township, also has life-threatening seizures that lead to respiratory arrest. Nurses from BAYADA Pediatrics have cared for her at home and school for 11 years. However, when the local school district changed nursing agencies, Weber worried that Jessica would be cared for by an inexperienced nurse unfamiliar with her daughter’s critical medical needs.

“Parents should have the power to be involved in decisions that affect their child,” said Weber. “You can’t take chances when it comes to the lives of our children.”

For more information about nursing care for children with special needs at home or school, call BAYADA at 888-4-BAYADA (422-9232)

*Founded in 1975 by J. Mark Baiada, BAYADA Home Health Care provides nursing, rehabilitative, therapeutic, hospice, and assistive care services to children, adults, and seniors in the comfort of their homes. Headquartered in suburban Philadelphia, BAYADA employs more than 17,000 nurses, home health aides, therapists, medical social workers, and other home health care professionals who serve their communities from more than 240 offices in 25 states and India. For more information, visit [www.bayada.com](http://www.bayada.com).*