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***Statement attributable to Lisa Newcomb, executive director
of the Empire State Association of Assisted Living***

“The PBS FRONTLINE investigation “Life and Death in Assisted Living,” broadcast is extremely troubling. On behalf of the Empire State Association of Assisted Living (ESAAL) membership, I extend our heartfelt thoughts and sympathy to all residents and families impacted in the events illustrated in the program.

It is important to remember that the situations depicted in the FRONTLINE episode are rare and not representative of assisted living care. Assisted living professionals and staff go to work each day to serve and care for their residents. Residents and families become staff’s extended families, and ensuring their safety and happiness is paramount.

In New York, ESAAL has worked diligently with state policymakers and regulators over the past decade to develop protections for assisted living residents to ensure situations described in the FRONTLINE episode do not happen here. All state-licensed residences must comply with extremely comprehensive regulations enforced by the New York State Department of Health. They:

- Are subject to strict admission/retention criteria;
- Must obtain documentation from the person’s primary care physician that they can be safely served in the assisted living environment;
- Must develop an individualized service plan describing in detail how they will address the person’s needs; and
- Are subject to comprehensive and regular review by New York State Department of Health surveyors to ensure they meet the more than 1,000 regulations to which they are subject.

Those licensed residences that do not meet these state regulations are subject to stiff fines and the possibility of closure.

It is also important to raise awareness to consumers that should they or their senior loved ones live in senior communities that are not licensed by the state regulating agency, these protections are not guaranteed and the consumer should beware to ensure what protections such a setting will or will not offer them.

Assisted living came about in response to consumer demands for the right to live in a home-like environment that respects the dignity and independence of a resident as well as has the ability to meet a consumer’s personal care needs as they age. On behalf of ESAAL’s licensed adult care facility and assisted living providers, I am proud to say that we remain committed to providing a safe, secure and happy environment for our residents and staff.”

ESAAL is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening New York State’s assisted living industry and promoting the best interests of providers and residents. It represents 250 Assisted Living Residences, Adult Homes and Enriched Housing Programs throughout New York State providing vital services to more than 30,000 seniors.