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New Report Finds Significant Health Concerns Loom for Seniors in Coming Years; Current Seniors Make Health Gains, But Challenges with Obesity and Proper Nutrition Persist

- **Next-generation seniors set to be less healthy than current seniors, with 55 percent growth in diabetes, 25 percent increase in obesity compared to levels of 15 years ago**
- **Current seniors have better health status than three years ago, with progress made in the number of home health care workers, and preventable hospitalizations**
- **Yet, challenges remain, including a nearly 9 percent increase in the rate of obesity and 5 percent increase in food insecurity among today's seniors**
- **Report finds Massachusetts replaces Vermont as healthiest state for seniors; Louisiana remains least healthy state for seniors**

MINNETONKA, Minn. (May 25, 2016) – Increasing rates of diabetes and obesity among middle-aged Americans (50-64 years old), coupled with the massive growth in the senior population over the next 15 years, are likely to significantly affect the health and quality of life for the next generation of seniors, according to some of the key findings of the 2016 United Health Foundation's *America's Health Rankings Senior Report*.

The report compares the health of middle-aged Americans in 2014 to middle-aged Americans in 1999 and details broad health concerns for the next generation of older Americans, as well as the potential for strain on the Medicare program and the overall health care system. Among the key findings for the next generation of seniors:

- Prevalence of diabetes among today's middle-aged adults has increased by a dramatic 55 percent, and the prevalence of obesity has increased by 25 percent, compared to middle-aged adults 15 years ago;
- 25 states are poised to face a 50 percent or greater increase in the senior population by 2030;
- Of the states with a rapidly growing senior population, seven are poised to face an 80 percent or greater increase in the prevalence diabetes vs. that of current seniors when they were middle-aged;
 - Among these states, Nebraska (145 percent) and Colorado (138 percent) will experience the most dramatic increases in the prevalence of diabetes among current middle-aged adults who will age into senior status by 2030;
- Among states with a rapidly growing senior population, 11 will also face a 20 percent or greater increase in the prevalence rate of obesity vs. current seniors when they were middle-aged;
 - Notably, Arizona (96 percent) will experience the most dramatic increase in the prevalence rate of obesity among current middle-aged adults who will age into senior status by 2030.

Report Shows Rise in Obesity Among Current Seniors, but Notable Improvements in Care Trends

The report shows the current generation of American seniors has better health status than it had just three years ago, but faces serious challenges due to increased obesity and poor nutrition. Specifically, the report finds:

- Preventable hospitalizations decreased by approximately 9 percent over the past year, while home health care worker availability increased by about 18 percent over the last three years;
- "Very good" or "excellent health" status among adults ages 65 and over increased by approximately 7 percent over the past three years;
- Challenges remain for seniors, including a 9 percent increase in the rate of obesity over the past three years;
- Food insecurity has increased by approximately 5 percent in the last year.

Massachusetts Ranks 1st; Louisiana Ranks 50th in Senior Health

Massachusetts is the healthiest state for seniors, rising from sixth place last year, while Louisiana again ranks as the least healthy state for older adults, according to the newest report. Among rankings, the report found:

- Vermont (2), New Hampshire (3), Minnesota (4), Hawaii (5) and Utah (6) round out the healthiest states for seniors;
- Oklahoma (49), Mississippi (48), Arkansas (47) and West Virginia (46) experience the most challenges in seniors' health and well-being;
- Rhode Island, Alaska and New Jersey made the greatest strides to improve their senior health ranking over the past three years;
 - Rhode Island jumped from 30 to 11 in the rankings, Alaska from 39 to 21 and New Jersey from 28 to 16;
 - These three states made progress in decreasing food insecurity, which is closely related to seniors' nutrition; Alaska and Rhode Island reduced hospital deaths; and Alaska and New Jersey decreased hip fractures.

“As a geriatrician, I see certain health conditions ‘snowball’ as people age – that is, smaller problems in middle-age can get much larger and more complicated, affecting overall health much more as we age,” said Rhonda Randall, D.O., senior adviser to United Health Foundation, and chief medical officer and executive vice president, UnitedHealthcare Retiree Solutions. “The America’s Health Rankings Senior Report is a call to action, particularly as we look at the data for the next generation of seniors. We must work together – across states, communities and the public health sector – to find ways to continue improving delivery of care to seniors and encourage wellness and health among both current and future seniors.”

To read the report and other materials, including visual illustrations, visit:

www.americashealthrankings.org/report/seniors.

About America’s Health Rankings Senior Report

America's Health Rankings Senior Report offers a comprehensive analysis of senior population health on a national and state-by-state basis across 35 measures of senior health. In commissioning the report, United Health Foundation seeks to promote discussion around the health of older Americans while driving communities, governments, stakeholders and individuals to take action to improve senior health.

Researchers draw data from more than a dozen government agencies and leading research organizations to create a focused, uniquely rich dataset for measuring senior health at the state level, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Labor, The Dartmouth Atlas Project, the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger and the Commonwealth Fund.

United Health Foundation also produces the annual *America's Health Rankings* report and has recently expanded its reporting series to include a number of spotlight reports focused on important markers of the nation's health, including impacts of unhealthy living, substance abuse and mental health. *America's Health Rankings* is also releasing two new population reports this year that examine the health of mothers and children and the health of those who have served our country. For more information, visit www.americashealthrankings.org.

About United Health Foundation

Through collaboration with community partners, grants and outreach efforts, United Health Foundation works to improve our health system, build a diverse and dynamic health workforce and enhance the well-being of local communities. United Health Foundation was established by UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH) in 1999 as a not-for-profit, private foundation dedicated to improving health and health care. To date, United Health Foundation has committed more than \$285 million to programs and communities around the world. We invite you to learn more at www.unitedhealthfoundation.org.

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