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Contacts:

Chryste Hall, 617-305-0515, chhall@aar.org

Jen Beam, 617-305-0562, jbeam@aar.org

Rhiannon D'Angelo, 617-305-0566, rdangelo@aar.org

**Statement from AARP Massachusetts State Director Deborah Banda
On Governor Patrick's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Proposal; Impact on Seniors**

BOSTON – AARP Massachusetts State Director Deborah Banda issued the following statement in response to Gov. Deval Patrick's Fiscal Year 2011 budget proposal, released this morning:

“AARP is disappointed that Gov. Patrick's budget proposal includes yet another multi-million dollar cut to Prescription Advantage, the state's pharmacy assistance program that works in tandem with Medicare Part D. We urge the administration to protect the Prescription Advantage benefits that more than 60,000 Massachusetts seniors rely on.

“Prescription Advantage currently operates at a bare-bones level after repeated budget cuts, amounting in more than \$26 million since Fiscal Year 2009. Most enrollees lost important benefits – including initial copayment assistance and all premium assistance – leaving too many struggling to afford the drugs that keep them healthy and out of more expensive care.

“That said: We do commend Gov. Patrick for level funding other important programs and services that help vulnerable seniors stay healthy, independent and living with dignity – like health care for low-income residents, home care services, protective services and Councils on Aging.

“As the economy continues to improve and revenues increase, we urge both the Patrick Administration and the Legislature to take steps to restore funding and benefits for those most in need by reversing budget cuts that have reduced Prescription Advantage benefits, protective services and other critical programs, and caused waiting lists for home care.”