



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Health Care Coalition Praises President Bush's Pledge to Make
Medical Liability Reform a Top Priority**
Calls on the US Congress to Pass Important Legislation

Washington, DC: The Health Coalition on Liability and Access (HCLA) today praised President Bush for his renewed commitment to fixing America's broken medical liability system. In his State of the Union address, the President called on Congress to pass "medical liability reform that will reduce health care costs and make sure patients have the doctors and care they need."

"President Bush understands that patients are suffering because meritless lawsuits are causing a health care crisis in states across the country," said Christian Shalgian, HCLA's chair. "It's time for Congress to pass common-sense reforms, including reasonable limits on non-economic damages, to ensure all Americans have access to quality, innovative and affordable health care. We need to put more money in the pockets of patients, not personal injury lawyers."

In states across the country, excessive medical liability litigation has made insurance for doctors unaffordable, and in some cases, unavailable at any price. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average jury award in medical liability cases jumped 76% between 1996 and 1999. A recent survey conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide found that more than 80 percent of Americans believe their access to quality, affordable health care is threatened by a badly broken and deeply flawed medical liability system; a similar majority (73 percent) support reforms like those advocated by President Bush.

"Medical reform is urgently needed – doctors and other health care providers understand it, patients understand it, and the American people understand it," said Shalgian. "The HCLA calls on the 109th Congress to enact this vital legislation without delay. We thank President Bush for his leadership and consistent support."

**HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS
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For more details, visit www.hcla.org. Health Coalition on Liability & Access is a national advocacy coalition of organizations representing doctors, hospitals, health care liability insurers, long-term care facilities, health care insurers, employers, and health care consumers. HCLA believes federal legislation, including reasonable limits on non-economic damages, is needed to bring fairness, timeliness and cost-efficiency to America's medical liability system.