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Health Care Groups Applaud President Bush's Call to Curb Litigation Costs & Preserve Access to Health Care

Medical Liability Costs Force Practices to Close and Leave Patients Without Care
HCLA Members Call on Congress to Pass the HEALTH Act

WASHINGTON, DC — The Health Care Liability Alliance (HCLA) praises President Bush for speaking out today on the need to curb the out-of-control liability costs that are forcing health care providers in more than a dozen states to drop vital services or close their practices.

Christian Shalgian, Chairman of HCLA, says, "Americans are increasingly aware that patients and doctors are paying an unacceptable price for excess litigation. Our medical liability system is broken and compromising access to care. We applaud the President for drawing attention to the crisis and urge Congress to pass HR 4600, the HEALTH Act – a proven solution based on reforms a majority of Americans support."

An independent poll conducted for HCLA in April 2002 found most Americans believe...

- Lawsuits Hinder Access To Medical Care – Nearly four out of five Americans (78%) express concern that skyrocketing medical liability costs could limit their access to care.
- Lawsuits Cause Medical Costs To Rise – More than seven out of 10 Americans (71%) agree that medical liability litigation is one of the primary forces driving up health care costs.
- Congress Should Limit Awards for Non-Economic Damages – Most Americans (73%) favor a law like HR 4600 that would guarantee injured patients full payment for lost wages and medical costs, and place reasonable limits on awards for "pain and suffering" in medical liability cases.
- Congress Should Limit the Percentage of Patients' Awards Taken by Trial Lawyers – More than three-quarters of Americans (76%) favor enacting a law like HR 4600 which would limit the percentage a trial lawyer can collect in a settlement or award from a medical liability case.

"The consensus, as the President's framework for improving the medical liability system illustrates, could not be more clear," says Shalgian. "Congress should take action now to see that injured patients are fairly compensated and to stop the runaway litigation that is making care unavailable or unaffordable to patients in many states. The liability reforms contained in the HEALTH Act will help to ensure that patients are able to receive timely access to quality health care services."

**HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS
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For more details, visit www.hcla.org. Health Care Liability Alliance is a national advocacy coalition of more than forty organizations representing doctors, hospitals, health care insurers, producers of medicines and health care consumers. HCLA believes federal legislation is needed to bring fairness, timeliness and cost-efficiency to America's medical liability system.

