



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health Care Groups Applaud House Efforts to Preserve Access to Health Care & Curb Litigation Costs

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) joined with members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee today in a press conference on Capitol Hill, calling on Congress to pass HR 4600, the HEALTH Act, a bill that will help 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, “The American public knows that patients and doctors are paying an unacceptable price for excess litigation. Our medical liability system is broken and threatening the access to care patients need. Congress can make a difference. We urge members of the Energy and Commerce Committee to support HR 4600, a bill that represents a proven solution based on reforms 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.

“Month by month, the crisis worsens. Congress must take action now to see that injured patients are fairly compensated and to stop the runaway litigation that is making care unavailable and unaffordable to patients across the country,” says Shalgian. “The HEALTH Act will help to ensure that patients are able to receive the care they need.”

**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.

