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## **Health Care Groups Applaud President Bush's Call to Curb Litigation Costs That Threaten Patients' Access to Care**

Liability Costs Force Practices to Close and Leave Patients Without Care  
HCLA Members Call on Congress to Take Action

WASHINGTON, DC — The Health Care Liability Alliance (HCLA) praises President Bush for speaking out today on the urgent need to fix our nation's out-of-control medical liability system. The President delivered his remarks in Pennsylvania, where lawsuit costs have driven health care providers' liability insurance premiums up by more than 100% -- leaving patients without access to quality care as practices are forced to close.

"Pennsylvania is only one of at least a dozen states in the midst of a health care crisis caused by excessive litigation," says Christian Shalgian, Chairman of HCLA. "We applaud the President for his commitment to work with the Congress to address this problem. Our medical liability system is broken, and Congress must take action immediately to ensure that patients will get the care they need."

Reports of access-to-care problems resulting from the liability crisis have increased dramatically in recent months. Patients had to be transferred out of state when surgeries at four West Virginia hospitals were canceled by doctors who could no longer afford liability insurance. Nevada faced the closing of a key trauma center. Pennsylvania reports neurosurgeons fleeing the state. One in 11 obstetricians nationwide have scaled back their practices to gynecology only. In Florida, the husband of a cancer patient whose surgeon might have to discontinue her care asked a reporter, "Are we supposed to go to the lawyers for surgery?"

Such victims of the crisis are not alone. Everyone pays the price for excessive litigation. An independent poll conducted for HCLA found four out of five Americans (78%) express concern that skyrocketing medical liability costs could limit their access to care, and more than seven out of 10 Americans (71%) agree that medical liability litigation is one of the primary forces driving up health care costs. A significant majority of Americans favor reforms similar to those outlined by the President, including 73% who favor a law that would guarantee injured patients full payment for lost wages and medical costs, while placing reasonable limits on awards for "pain and suffering" in medical liability cases.

"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 ensure that injured patients are fairly compensated and to stop the runaway litigation that is making care unavailable or unaffordable to patients in many states."

**HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS**  
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*For more details, visit [www.hcla.org](http://www.hcla.org). Health Care Liability Alliance is a national advocacy coalition of more than fifty 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.*