



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 13, 2009

MEDIA CONTACT
Lauren Slepian – 609-744-4794

Health Coalition Sends Legislative Proposals For Medical Liability Reform to Congress

WASHINGTON, DC – The Health Coalition on Liability and Access today distributed a report on Capitol Hill, advocating legislative proposals for medical liability reform that they will push to have included in comprehensive health care reforms currently under consideration by Congress.

HCLA supports reform of our nation's broken medical liability system in order to provide fair and timely compensation to plaintiffs, reduce health care costs, and preserve patient access to quality medical care.

"There is widespread agreement that the current medical liability system in our country is broken and does not serve patients well. Increasingly, health care policy experts, opinion leaders and the public understand that real health care reform cannot be achieved without medical liability reform," said HCLA Chair Mike Stinson.

"Our reform proposals are designed to put more money in the pockets of patients, not personal injury lawyers, and to help lower health care costs by reducing defensive medicine. We urge Congress to take action on medical liability reform, and include these solutions in their comprehensive health care reform legislation," Stinson said.

Proposed reforms include a mandated Certificate of Merit filed along with the lawsuit to help eliminate lawsuits without merit; periodic payments of damage awards that exceed \$50,000; limited liability for physicians who volunteer their health care services during an emergency or disaster; minimum standards for expert witnesses; and no de facto liability for an incident resulting in nonpayment of claims by Medicare under the so-called "never events" payment policy.

HCLA is also supporting pilot programs in various states, allowing states or medical systems that participate to be eligible for additional federal health care funding. Included in these state reform projects are an "early offers" system to expedite or resolve liability cases rather than going to trial; forming specialized health courts to handle liability lawsuits; and a waiver of liability for health care providers who practice according to acceptable clinical practice guidelines. Many of the details could be worked out by individual states or medical systems to allow for flexibility within the program.

To read the full proposal on medical liability reform legislative options, visit www.hcla.org.

#

**HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS
CONTACT LAUREN SLEPIAN, 609-744-4794**

For more details, visit www.hcla.org. The Health Coalition on Liability and Access is a national advocacy coalition representing doctors, hospitals, health care liability insurers, pharmaceutical companies, health care insurers, employers and health care consumers. HCLA believes federal legislation is needed to bring fairness, timeliness and cost-efficiency to America's medical liability system.