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## **Health Care Groups Applaud President Bush for His Commitment to Ending “Wasteful and Frivolous” Lawsuits**

WASHINGTON, DC: The Health Coalition on Liability and Access (HCLA) today applauded President Bush’s call in his State of the Union Address for medical liability reform to “eliminate wasteful and frivolous medical lawsuits” which deny patients access to high quality, innovative and affordable health care.

Christian Shalgian, Chair of the Health Coalition on Liability and Access said, “President Bush knows that patients, doctors and health care providers around the country are dealing with a worsening crisis in health care access. The President is right: Congress must pass common-sense medical liability reforms in order to ‘protect the doctor-patient relationship and keep doctors doing good.’”

Out-of-control medical liability litigation has made medical liability insurance unaffordable, or unavailable, in many states. The number of lottery-sized verdicts is up 600 percent in the last 15 years; the General Accounting Office found that the cost of these claims is the primary reason why doctors are finding insurance to be unaffordable or unobtainable at any price. When doctors can’t get liability insurance, they have to cut back their services or stop practicing altogether – and that means patients have less access to affordable, quality health care. This is especially true for doctors in high-risk specialties such as obstetrics and neurosurgery.

The House of Representatives has already passed legislation to reform the medical liability system, and President Bush has given it his strong support. Reform opponents have, thus far, blocked a vote on the substance of this important issue in the Senate.

“HCLA represents thousands of individuals and organizations around the country who are committed to preserving access to health care and keeping overall health care costs under control,” Shalgian said. “We appreciate President Bush’s support for reform and his leadership on this important issue. The need for action is urgent, and we will continue to work with Congress to advance meaningful medical liability reform legislation and bring it to a vote in the Senate.”

**HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS  
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*For more details, visit [www.hcla.org](http://www.hcla.org). Health Coalition on Liability & Access is a national advocacy coalition of more than seventy-five organizations representing doctors, hospitals, health care liability insurers, pharmaceutical companies, long-term care facilities, 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.*