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MEDIA CONTACT
Lauren Slepian – 202-295-6316

HCLA Releases Report on Status of Medical Liability Reform

WASHINGTON, DC – The Health Coalition on Liability and Access released a report today on the status of medical liability reform on the state and federal level. The report detailed the success of liability reforms in states that have passed laws limiting non-economic damages, while also acknowledging the challenges that remain.

“While comprehensive federal legislation has yet to be enacted and is unlikely in the 111th Congress, strong advocacy efforts over the past few years have paid significant dividends by creating a supportive climate for successful reform legislation at the state level,” the report states.

Texas is just one example of how medical liability reforms reversed the tide of doctors fleeing the state. Prior to enacting reforms, Texas ranked 48th out of 50 states in physician manpower. Since reforms were passed in 2003, 76 counties have experienced a net gain in emergency physicians, including 39 medically underserved counties and 30 counties that are partially medically underserved.

The HCLA supports inclusion of medical liability reforms as a part of any comprehensive health care reform taken up by Congress this year. Incremental reforms, such as “early offers,” specialized health courts, and the practice evidence-based medicine are all steps to address the medical liability reform crisis, and the HCLA will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these reforms.

The report notes that, “While these reforms are not comprehensive in nature and do not address the root cause of our dysfunctional liability system, some may promise positive results, and they all continue to highlight the critical need for a real and lasting solution.”

The HCLA will continue to make the case for reform that puts effective curbs on excessive lawsuits, in order to lower health care costs and to ensure patient access to quality medical care. Visit www.hcla.org to view the full report.

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HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS CONTACT LAUREN SLEPIAN, 202-295-2316

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.