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Health Coalition Applauds House for Prioritizing Patient Access to Care

WASHINGTON, DC – The Health Coalition on Liability and Access today applauded the House of Representatives for prioritizing patient access to care by passing H.R. 1215, the Protecting Access to Care Act by a vote of 218-210.

The Protecting Access to Care Act is modeled after proven medical liability reforms already in place in Texas, California, and many other states around the country that have had a positive effect on increasing access to care and keeping health care costs affordable for patients and physicians.

The bill ensures full and unlimited compensation for all economic losses in cases of medical negligence, allowing for payment of past and future medical expenses, lost wages, rehabilitation costs, and other out-of-pocket expenses. The legislation also permits the additional recovery of up to \$250,000 for non-economic damages, such as damages awarded for pain and suffering.

By enacting a reasonable statute of limitations for filing lawsuits, and limiting attorney fees, the bill will ensure a speedier resolution to claims and that damage awards go to deserving patients – not personal injury lawyers. It also protects state authority by allowing states to establish or keep reforms that may differ from the federal legislation.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the comprehensive medical liability reforms included in the Protecting Access to Care Act would lead to cost savings of \$44 billion over the 2017-2026 period for federal health care programs such as Medicare and Medicaid and reduce our national deficit by almost \$50 billion over the same 10-year period.

“Our broken medical liability system is one step closer to more efficiently and equitably compensating deserving patients and reducing the medical lawsuit abuse that undermines the physician-patient relationship,” said HCLA Chair Mike Stinson. “I applaud the House for making comprehensive medical liability reform and patient access to care a high-priority health care policy initiative this Congress and encourage the Senate to quickly do the same.”

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