



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Broad Health Coalition Disappointed in Baucus Bill *Urges Senate to Take Real Action on Medical Liability Reform*

WASHINGTON, DC – Following yesterday's release of the "Chairman's Mark" by Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus, the Health Coalition on Liability and Access expressed disappointment that the bill does not take action on medical liability reform, and urges the Senate to include real reform measures in any health care bill it passes.

"The plan released by Senator Baucus does nothing to solve our nation's medical liability crisis, or reduce health care costs associated with defensive medicine," said HCLA Chair Mike Stinson.

"We had hoped that the Senate would take this important pro-patient issue seriously after hearing from the President last week. True health care reform that reduces costs, increases access to care, and protects patients can only be achieved if it includes medical liability reform."

As it stands, the Chairman's Mark does not include specific medical liability reform measures. Its only reference to the issue is in the form of an expression of the "Sense of the Senate" that Congress should consider establishing a state demonstration program to evaluate alternatives to the current medical liability system.

"We urge the Senate to not only codify demonstration projects to encourage states to experiment with specific alternative reforms, but to also immediately enact meaningful medical liability reform. States across the country, like California and Texas, have addressed their own medical liability crises with reforms that have a proven track record of success. These states have been, in effect, demonstration projects and should be a model for reform at the Federal level."

Medical lawsuit abuse drives up the costs of health care by the billions each year, and forces good doctors out of the practice of medicine. The fear of being sued has caused physicians to subject their patients to tests and procedures they may not need, driving up medical costs dramatically. Addressing the medical liability crisis and including fixes to our nation's broken medical liability system in federal health care reform legislation is essential to reforming our overall health care system and guaranteeing access to care for all patients.

The HCLA is committed to enacting immediate, effective medical liability reform, formalizing and codifying voluntary state demonstration projects on alternative reforms, and ensuring that health care reform does not expand liability and encourage medical lawsuit abuse.

To read more about the HCLA's recent actions on health care and medical liability reform, visit www.hcla.org.

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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, employers, health care consumers, and others. HCLA believes federal legislation is needed to bring fairness, timeliness and cost-efficiency to America's medical liability system.