

May 12, 2004

The Honorable Gene Taylor
Canon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Taylor:

On behalf of the American Medical Group Association (AMGA), I urge you to vote in support of HR 4280. This proposed legislation will help ensure patients' access to necessary and timely medical care. Rep. Jim Greenwood's HEALTH Act of 2004 (HR 4280) is virtually identical to HR 5 that was approved by the House in March last year by a vote of 229 to 196. The crisis in affordable liability coverage for physicians is growing so acute that its impact on patient access is undeniable.

The AMGA represents some of the nation's largest, most prestigious integrated healthcare delivery systems caring for more than 50 million patients in 42 states. These AMGA-member group practices have, on average, 272 physicians and 13 satellite locations in both urban and rural locations. These physicians are dedicated to serving their patients and communities, but responsible medical specialists in certain states have been forced to curtail or terminate their practices because of unaffordable liability coverage. As a result, patients are, at best, inconvenienced by longer waits or further distances, and at worst are medically endangered from lack of timely access to appropriate specialist care.

Many speculate on what factors may, or may not, lower liability premiums. But only California's 25-year experience with the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA) of 1975 provides sufficient long-term implementation data demonstrating that both court access and lower liability costs protect patient access to medical care. Rep. Greenwood's HR 4280 is modeled after MICRA to produce the same result.

Unless a national remedy is applied soon, our country will have a two-tiered system of medical care: one for those lucky Americans who live in certain states where liability reform has been implemented and physician access is protected; and another for those citizens located in states lacking reform and sufficient physician access. Your support of a national system of liability reform will help ensure equal access to highly valuable medical care for all Americans.

I urge you to vote in favor of HR 4280, the HEALTH Act of 2004. Thank you.

Sincerely,