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The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
232 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
204 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing in strong support of H.R. 1215, the “Protecting Access to Care Act of 2017” (PACA). This legislation includes significant reforms that will help repair our nation’s medical liability system, reduce the growth of health care costs, and preserve patients’ access to medical care.

The current system fails both patients and physicians. The cost of our medical liability system is borne by everyone as defensive medicine adds billions of dollars to the cost of health care, translating into higher health care spending and higher health insurance premiums. Studies reveal that physicians are compelled to order more tests and procedures to protect themselves from medical liability lawsuits. Every dollar that goes toward medical liability costs and defensive medicine is a dollar that does not go to patients who need care, nor toward investment in patient safety and quality improvements or health information technology systems.

We believe that the proven reforms contained in H.R. 1215 would greatly improve our medical liability system, while ensuring that patients who have been injured receive just compensation. This bill provides the right balance of reforms by promoting speedier resolutions to disputes, maintaining access to courts, maximizing patient recovery of damage awards with unlimited compensation for economic damages, while limiting non-economic damages to a quarter million dollars. Importantly, H.R. 1215 includes language to protect medical liability reforms at the state level.

It is time for Congress to enact meaningful medical liability reform legislation to repair the current litigious climate that continues to increase health care costs and compromise patients’ access to care. We urge all members to support this legislation when it comes to the House floor this week.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD