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February 1, 2012

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Klobuchar and Casey:

The American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM) and the AAEM Residents and Students Association (AAEM/RSA), representing over 6,500 emergency physicians and more than 3,000 emergency medicine residents across the United States, thank you for introducing S. 296, the ***Preserving Access to Life Saving Medications Act***. This legislation is a critical first step in addressing a serious public health problem and we appreciate your leadership in advancing solutions.

The growing number of drug shortages is presenting serious challenges to members of our specialty and endangers the critically ill patients for whom we care. The number of drugs in short supply is increasing at an alarming rate. A list that previously included anesthetics and cancer therapies has now expanded to include emergency medications such as critical antimicrobials, pain medications, and poison antidotes that often require highly time-sensitive administration. In many cases, therapeutic alternatives are not available, or carry increased risk of severe side effects and drug-to-drug interactions. As emergency physicians, we see drug shortages threatening patient safety and quality of care in emergency departments nationwide.

Your proposed legislation would provide the FDA with tools to better manage and, hopefully, prevent shortages of life-saving medications. S. 296 enables the FDA to work more effectively with supply chain entities to ensure drug availability, and enhances the Agency's ability to monitor drugs that are vulnerable to shortages in the future. The bill also enables the agency to work with drug manufacturers to establish contingency plans for manufacturing interruptions such as raw material shortages, adjustments to production capabilities, and discontinuations.

Again we thank you for your leadership on this issue and look forward to working with your offices toward passage of this legislation. If AAEM and AAEM/RSA can be of assistance in bringing this legislation to reality, please feel free to contact Kathleen Ream, AAEM's Government Affairs Director, at 571-213-5662.

Sincerely yours,

Howard Blumstein, MD, FAAEM
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