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February 15, 2011

The Honorable Phil Gingrey
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Gingrey:

As the specialty society for more than 6,500 board certified emergency physicians across the United States, the American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM) has deep concerns about rising health care costs and the resulting negative impact on quality medical care for our patients. AAEM commends your leadership in introducing H.R. 5, the ***Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-cost, Timely Healthcare Act of 2011***, and feels strongly that such legislation will create the change required to make health care more affordable, accessible, and still preserve the rights of those injured to be fairly compensated.

Studies have demonstrated that up to 83% of lawsuits filed against physicians have no basis in fact. These groundless cases result in huge costs from (1) higher medical malpractice insurance premiums, (2) high litigation costs, and (3) the indirect effect of "defensive medicine" and the resulting misallocation of scarce health care resources. AAEM believes appropriate tort reforms will mitigate these problems. Responsible legislation to reform the current tort system will improve patient care by making health care more affordable and accessible without affecting the standards of care that physicians must meet, or the ability of plaintiffs who suffered harm from medical error to secure proper compensation.

Accomplishing meaningful tort reform outlined in this legislation will reign in the cost of medical care, improve the health of our patients, and provide substantial economic benefits to our society and country in these difficult economic times. AAEM looks forward to the enactment of H.R. 5 and offer our resources to bring this legislation to reality this year. If we can be of any assistance, please feel free to contact Kathleen Ream, AAEM's Government Affairs Director, at 703-241-3947.

Sincerely yours,

Howard Blumstein, MD, FAAEM

American Academy of Emergency Medicine

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