

June 18, 2004

The Honorable William H. Frist, MD
United States Senate
S-230 The U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Letter also sent to Sen. Daschle

Dear Dr. Frist:

For our physicians and the patients they serve, the undersigned state and national medical specialty societies strongly urge a prompt vote on S. 720, the "Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act." S. 720 is an important quality improvement initiative because it would create a system in which health care professionals share and analyze information about errors to prevent similar incidents from recurring. This voluntary reporting system enables physicians, hospitals and other health care providers to report information on errors to Patient Safety Organizations (PSO) that would confidentially collect and analyze the information. The PSO would also provide patient safety improvement strategies based on the data. Currently, there is a disincentive for physicians and other health care professionals to engage in a reporting system because of the fear of litigation. The program is modeled after a similar system set up in the aviation industry. Aviation safety has improved dramatically because pilots and ground crews can report mistakes without fear of retribution.

S. 720 would provide the same option for physicians and other health care professionals. Similar legislation, H.R. 663, passed the House of Representatives in March 2003, by a vote of 418 to 6. S. 720 was unanimously reported out of the Senate HELP Committee in July 2003. The time for Senate action is quickly running out.

We urge you to support a floor vote on passage of S. 720 in the near future and to facilitate resolution of differences with the House-passed bill. Patient safety legislation is too important for further delay. Thank you for your commitment to America's patients.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Facial, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association for Hand Surgery

American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Clinical Urologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College of Radiology Association
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Medical Directors Association
American Medical Group Association
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Surgery of the Hand
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Bariatric Physicians
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of General Surgeons
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Marshfield Clinic
Medical Group Management Association
National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care
North American Spine Society

Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Hospital Medicine
Society of Interventional Radiology
Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces
Society of Thoracic Surgeons

Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Alaska State Medical Association
Arizona Medical Association
Arkansas Medical Society
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Medical Society of Delaware
Medical Society of the District of Columbia
Florida Medical Association
Medical Association of Georgia
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Iowa Medical Society
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Maine Medical Association
Michigan State Medical Society
Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
Missouri State Medical Association
Montana Medical Society
Nebraska Medical Association
Nevada State Medical Association
New Hampshire Medical Society
Medical Society of New Jersey
New Mexico Medical Society
Medical Society of the State of New York
North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio State Medical Association
Oklahoma State Medical Association
Oregon Medical Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
Rhode Island Medical Society

South Carolina Medical Association
South Dakota State Medical Association
Tennessee Medical Association
Texas Medical Association
Utah Medical Association
Vermont Medical Society
Medical Society of Virginia
Washington State Medical Association
West Virginia State Medical Association
Wisconsin Medical Society
Wyoming Medical Society