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July 27, 2005

The Honorable Phil Gingrey, M.D.
U.S. House of Representatives
119 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gingrey:

On behalf of the more than 30,000 members of the American College of Cardiology (ACC), I am writing to express strong support of the "Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-cost, Timely Healthcare (HEALTH) Act," H.R. 5. For nearly two years I have been actively involved with a national campaign for medical liability reform under the banner of Doctors for Medical Liability Reform (DMLR). Through DMLR, the ACC has been aggressively working to educate both physicians and the public about the important need for federal legislation.

As you well know, the current medical liability system has forced many physicians to drastically alter the way they practice medicine, move to another state or even end their practice. Every segment of the medical community is affected by high liability insurance premiums, even my relatively low-risk specialty of cardiology.

As a practicing cardiologist at the Missouri Heart Center, I have seen the rising cost of medical liability premiums cause several of my physician friends to leave the practice of medicine. In my state, we are seeing medical liability insurance rates increase 50 to 300 percent. In addition, some physicians in Missouri cannot even find an insurance company to cover them. Unfortunately, similar problems are mirrored in many states across the country.

I applaud you for introducing the HEALTH Act, which offers solutions to help control the cost of professional liability insurance premiums and safeguard patient access to care.

The ACC is committed to working with you to ensure that this important legislation is passed by both chambers of Congress this year and would like to offer its assistance to you. Please feel free to contact Camille Bonta at cbonta@acc.org or at (301) 897-2620 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jerry D. Kennett, MD, FACC
Representative
Doctors for Medical Liability Reform

Jb:DM#322155:mb

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