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March 8, 2005

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi  
Chairman  
HELP Committee  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-4503

Dear Senator Enzi:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA) and its more than 5,000 member hospitals, health care systems, networks and other providers of care, I am writing to express our support for the Patient Safety Improvement Act Of 2005 (S. 544).

We commend your leadership and dedication in putting together a bill that lays out a common-sense approach to improving patient safety – a goal that is at the heart of every hospital's mission.

The AHA is committed to seeing enactment of patient safety legislation that will help create a “culture of safety” in which nurses, doctors and others can share information when adverse events happen, engage appropriate outside experts in the analysis of patient safety concerns, and, together, enhance our knowledge of how to prevent medical errors.

As you have recognized, a major obstacle stands in the way of such openness. Currently, patient safety information that is shared among providers or with outside experts is not confidential and is subject to legal proceedings. The Institute of Medicine has called on Congress to knock down this barrier by providing legal protection for information collected to advance patient safety research and education. This bill works toward this goal – a goal the nation’s hospitals strongly support.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff to enact patient safety legislation that creates a voluntary, protected system for sharing information that allows for the creation of a true culture of safety. Again, we appreciate your strong leadership on this issue and your resolve to achieve meaningful long-term approach to enhancing the safety of health care in our nation.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack

cc: Senators Frist, Gregg, Jeffords Murray and Bingaman

