



**American Hospital
Association**

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July 26, 2005

The Honorable Joe Barton
Chairman
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6115

Dear Chairman Barton:

On behalf of our members – 4,800 hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and 33,000 individuals – the American Hospital Association (AHA) appreciates this opportunity to express our strongest support for the “Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2005,” S 544. We commend your leadership and dedication in creating legislation 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 remains committed to the enactment of patient safety legislation. We believe your bill will help create a “culture of safety” in which nurses, physicians and others can share information when adverse events happen, engage appropriate outside experts in the analysis of patient safety concerns, and enhance our knowledge for preventing medical errors.

But, as you’ve 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 eliminate this barrier by providing legal protection for information that is collected to advance patient safety research and education. Your legislation would help achieve this goal – one that is supported by the nation’s hospitals.

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

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

cc: Representatives Deal and Dingell

