



**American Hospital
Association**

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The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords
United States House of Representatives
502 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Giffords:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association's (AHA) nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems, and other health care organizations, and our 37,000 individual members, I am writing to express our support for H.R. 6394, the "Border Health Care Relief Act of 2008." The legislation extends Section 1011 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) (P.L. 208-173) through 2012.

Section 1011 of the MMA allocates \$250 million annually to help hospitals offset the costs of providing emergency care to undocumented immigrants. The Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) requires Medicare-participating hospitals to provide treatment to anyone who needs emergency care, including undocumented immigrants, regardless of their ability to pay.

Before Section 1011 became law, the federal government only paid for the medical care of undocumented immigrants who were in the custody of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The United States-Mexico Border Counties Coalition reported in 2002 that the costs of providing emergency care to undocumented immigrants was saddling already financially strapped border hospitals with more than \$200 million in unpaid bills. Since that report was released, the problem has become even more serious because of the rising number of undocumented immigrants who continue to come to the U.S. and who require emergency health care services.

Health care providers face enormous financial pressures associated with – among other things – labor shortages, new pharmaceuticals, the adoption of information technology, and caring for an increasing number of uninsured. In today's unpredictable environment, hospitals need adequate reimbursement to ensure that our patients and communities receive the care they expect and deserve. Hospitals should not have to bear the burden of uncompensated care to undocumented immigrants.

Section 1011 is vital to helping states maintain a health care safety net. H.R. 6394 helps accomplish this critical goal. We look forward to working with you to advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

