American Hospital
Association

Liberty Place, Suite 700
325 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-2802
(202) 638-1100 Phone
www.aha.org

January 26, 2011

The Honorable Phil Gingrey, M.D.
United States House of Representatives
442 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gingrey:

On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 40,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) wishes to express our support for the "Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-cost, Timely Healthcare (HEALTH) Act" (H.R. 5). This legislation would reduce health care costs and promote access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

The high costs associated with the current medical liability system not only harm hospitals and physicians, but also patients and their communities. Across the nation, access to health care is being negatively impacted as physicians move from states with high insurance costs or stop providing services that may expose them to a greater risk of litigation. The increased costs that result from the current flawed medical liability system not only hinder access to affordable health care, they also threaten the stability of the hospital field, which employed 5.3 million people in 2009, and continues to be one of the largest sources of private-sector jobs.

An estimated $50 to $100 billion is spent annually on defensive medicine – services not provided for the primary purpose of benefiting the patient, but rather to mitigate the risk of liability. To help make health care more affordable and efficient, the current medical liability system must be reformed.

The "Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-cost, Timely Healthcare Act" is based on the proven model of reform enacted decades ago in California, and was supported by the AHA when introduced in previous Congresses.

We applaud your continued leadership on this issue, and enthusiastically support the H.R. 5. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation and other proposals that will deliver meaningful medical liability reform.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President