
NEWS

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Santorum Leadership on Federal Medmal Reform Praised by Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) *Reform in Washington Must be Complemented by Reform in Harrisburg*

Harrisburg, PA – The President and CEO of the Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA), Alan G. Rosenbloom, today praised U.S. Senator Rick Santorum's efforts in the U.S. Senate to pass comprehensive federal medical malpractice reform, and said any federal reforms in Washington must be complemented by a state constitutional amendment in Harrisburg capping jury awards on non economic damages.

"Thanks to Rick Santorum, federal medical malpractice reform remains a legislative priority in the U.S. Senate, and he understands providers' efforts to boost and maintain quality standards are directly undermined by the skyrocketing growth of litigation," stated Rosenbloom. "We remain optimistic Senator Santorum can work successfully with President Bush to enact federal reforms protecting quality patient care, and we are adamant in our belief that significant medical malpractice reforms in Harrisburg must complement federal action."

Rosenbloom said that because PHCA sees no end in sight to the growing crisis in the Commonwealth, the only real way to bring down skyrocketing malpractice insurance rates is for lawmakers to pass an amendment to the state constitution -- capping jury awards on non-economic damages.

"After all the talk, after all the studies and after all the continuing chaos, this is the only workable means of protecting seniors' access to quality health care in Pennsylvania," the PHCA President and CEO continued.

As with doctors and hospitals, long term care providers throughout the Commonwealth face a crisis in both the availability and affordability of professional liability insurance. But unlike doctors and hospitals, however, the relatively modest loss experience of long term care providers does not warrant the dramatic increases in insurance costs: 250% increases in primary rates from 1996 to 2000; annual increases in primary rates of as much as 500% in 2001, 2002 and 2003; and, CAT Fund/MCare Fund assessment increases of 100% or more in many regions of the Commonwealth in 2002 and 2003.

Moreover, said Rosenbloom, besides the fact seniors' access to quality long term care is placed more at risk every day, Pennsylvania taxpayers are unwillingly being forced to subsidize growing lawsuit costs.

"Any reasonable person will agree the growing negative impact on patients and taxpayers is untenable and unsustainable," Rosenbloom said. "Now is time to take stock of reality, and to fix the malpractice insurance problem for good in 2004 with a state constitutional amendment. This is strong medicine, but is necessary medicine to save the viability of the Commonwealth's health care system."

With the second highest senior population in the nation, Rosenbloom said Pennsylvania will continue to be among the states most adversely impacted by the growing malpractice crisis unless it is finally resolved. "We appreciate the Senator's leadership on this issue in Washington, and we will continue to offer our help and assistance," the PHCA President and CEO concluded.

PHCA is a statewide membership services organization representing more than 325 long-term care and senior service providers throughout the Commonwealth. Additional information about PHCA is available by calling 717-221-1800 or visiting www.phca.org.

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