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Editor, The Wall Street Journal
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

Dear Editor:

There is widespread agreement that our medical liability system is broken (“Defensive Medicine May be Costlier than it Seems,” by Amitabh Chandra, Anupam B. Jena And Seth A. Seabury, February 7), but because personal injury lawyers have a vested interest in the status quo, deserving patients wait too long to receive compensation and physicians remain the target of meritless lawsuits.

The Health Coalition on Liability and Access (HCLA) agrees with the authors that the cost of defensive medicine is not adequately reflected in the two to five percent reduction in health care spending some have cited. In fact, some studies peg the costs at a whopping \$191 billion to \$242 billion each year (PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Pacific Research Institute, respectively).

However, the authors ignore that comprehensive medical liability reforms have decreased the frequency of claims and dramatically increased access to care in some states.

Take Mississippi, where liability insurance costs have dropped nearly 50 percent and the number of lawsuits have fallen more than 70 percent since reforms were enacted. Or Texas, where 2012 saw a 45 percent increase in the annual number of newly licensed physicians over pre-reform numbers.

Unfortunately, these laws continue to be under attack by personal injury lawyers – one of the reasons their effect on defensive medicine has not been greater. That is why 77 percent of orthopaedic surgeons say it will take *comprehensive federal reforms* to make meaningful reductions in defensive medicine.

The HCLA believes demonstration projects suggested by the authors should continue to be studied for their effectiveness. In the meantime, the HCLA will push for proven, comprehensive federal reforms that will improve access, reduce costs, and protect patients - not personal injury lawyers.

Sincerely,

Mike Stinson, Chair

Katie Orrico, Vice Chair

Health Coalition on Liability and Access
Washington, DC