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## **OVER 80 NATIONAL AND STATE ORGANIZATIONS ASK U.S. HOUSE TO REJECT BILL LIMITING PATIENTS' RIGHTS**

Eighty-one patient safety, consumer, healthcare, civil rights, senior, legal, education and labor groups released a letter today that was sent to the U.S. House of Representatives, expressing strong opposition to H.R. 1215, the "Protecting Access to Care Act of 2017." The bill is scheduled for a House vote later this week. Groups include the AFL-CIO, American Association of Directors of Nursing Services, the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, Consumer Federation of America, the Impact Fund, and the National Education Association.

According to the letter, "this bill would limit the legal rights of injured patients and families of those killed by negligent health care." In addition, "the bill's sweeping scope covers not only cases involving medical malpractice, but also cases involving unsafe drugs and nursing home abuse and neglect." What's more, the bill "would overturn traditional state common law and would be an unprecedented interference with the work of state court judges and juries in civil cases." Rather than "insulating negligent providers from accountability, harming patients and saddling taxpayers with the cost," the groups say, "Congress should focus on improving patient safety and reducing deaths and injuries."

The bill incorporates some provisions enacted in Texas in 2003, although the federal bill is much broader than Texas law. Ware V. Wendell, Executive Director of Texas Watch, said, "Our nation should not repeat Texas' medical malpractice mistakes. We've suffered under many similar restrictions for nearly a decade and a half and the only beneficiaries are the worst doctors and insurance companies. Patients continue to pay the price."

"It is hard to imagine anything more un-American than to take away the rights of frail elderly individuals (or their survivors) to ever seek accountability in a court of law for any future nursing home neglect or abuse, no matter how heinous or harmful," said Richard J. Mollot, Executive Director of the Long Term Care Community Coalition.

Joanne Doroshow, Executive Director of the Center for Justice & Democracy, said, "Proponents of this bill say they want government out of health care. Yet this bill is loaded with new federal mandates, including harsh provisions mandating the value of a someone's life. Clearly, voters did not send politicians to Washington to harm patients in this way, rigging courts against everyday Americans and taking away rights guaranteed by state constitutions across America."

Remington Gregg, consumer and civil justice counsel at Public Citizen, said, “This proposal to shield medical providers from liability is nothing but a giveaway to industry. Lawmakers who support this bill would further harm those suffering from doctors’ wrongdoing and injuries caused by drugs or devices. If lawmakers really are concerned about the well-being of their constituents, they should address the epidemic of injuries and fatalities due to medical errors, and ignore calls to limit providers’ accountability. Contrary to assertions by the corporate-backed GOP, costs relating to medical liability are tiny in the scope of national health care costs and are declining.”

“Patients are among the most vulnerable of consumers and their rights need to be protected,” said Sally Greenberg, Executive Director of the National Consumers League. “This bill goes in the wrong direction, undermining those protections by immunizing from liability nursing homes whose practices harm patients. That is wrong and we ask the House to oppose this unfortunate legislation.”

A copy of the full letter is here: <https://centerjd.org/content/group-letter-us-house-representatives-opposing-med-mal-nursing-home-drug-bill>

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