



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

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July 18, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blunt:

On behalf of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the nearly 130,000 osteopathic physicians and osteopathic medical students we represent, thank you for introducing the “Health Care Safety Net Enhancement Act of 2017” (S. 548). This legislation would help strengthen the health care safety net for all Americans by improving our nation’s emergency departments.

We support the original congressional intent of the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA). The law provides that all patients who go to a hospital emergency department seeking emergency medical services should receive a medical screening examination and stabilizing treatment, without ability to pay being used as a factor in determining whether treatment will be provided. However, the high liability risk of caring for emergency patients, many of whom are under or uninsured, along with the continuing decline in reimbursements for emergency medical services, has created physician staffing shortages in many emergency rooms and threatens patient access to care.

We are pleased that this bill, which extends liability coverage of the Public Health Service Act to include EMTALA services through a separate fund, would provide the necessary liability protections for these services that EMTALA mandates. This will provide emergency and on-call physicians with necessary protection so that they can give life-saving care.

Again, thank you for introducing this important legislation. We appreciate your efforts to clarify the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA). The AOA and our members stand ready to assist you in securing its enactment into law.

Sincerely,

Boyd R. Buser, DO
President