



September 20, 2005

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
SD-219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.
President

Dear Chairman Grassley:

On behalf of the nation's 125 accredited allopathic medical schools, some 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, 98 academic and scientific societies representing 105,000 medical school faculty, and the nation's medical students and residents, I write to applaud you for your leadership in proposing "The Emergency Health Care Relief Act of 2005" to ensure health care coverage for our most vulnerable Katrina victims in this time of emergency.

The nation's medical schools and teaching hospitals extend to the communities of the Gulf Coast region their deepest sympathies for hardships caused by Hurricane Katrina. Partnering with their fellow medical schools and teaching hospitals in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, and local, state and federal governments, teaching hospitals and medical schools are responding by temporarily relocating medical students and residents; helping dislocated medical researchers salvage important research, and sending to the affected region medical supplies and teams to provide much needed patient care.

The AAMC supports an important goal of your legislation-- to ensure that Katrina victims get the adequate patient care, regardless of their location. Specifically, your legislation streamlines Medicaid's current program requirements to allow states to temporarily enroll eligible Katrina victims into Medicaid; helps employers in affected states maintain their commitment to providing private health care insurance to employees; and waives late enrollment requirements for Medicare Part B beneficiaries.

Because AAMC members are an important part of the Medicaid safety net, we also applaud your bill's sensitivity to the needs of providers during this difficult time. Through expanded federal assistance to states, flexibility with Medicare bad debt requirements and the creation of a disaster relief fund for providers experiencing a decrease or increase in patient volume, providers will be better able to cover their costs associated with day to day operations and providing care to Katrina evacuees.

As the Gulf region begins its recovery and you move forward on this important piece of legislation, the AAMC looks forward to working with you and your staff to continue to address the needs of Katrina patients and providers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan J. Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jordan J. Cohen. M.D.