

Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I support Raised Bill No. 6622 for several reasons- the #1 reason is access to care.

I have been practicing Emergency Medicine in Connecticut for over 25 years. I have worked at several community hospitals and I currently work in the Emergency Department at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center. I see people from your districts and towns who present to our emergency department with a variety of medical and traumatic emergencies and I am proud to serve as part of a dedicated team of physicians and nurses in this way.

There are several negative consequences for patient care related to physician concerns about liability. The most serious shortage of physician specialists is at average to smaller sized community hospitals. These hospitals are the backbone of emergency care for the people of Connecticut. This shortage of specialists limits the care that can be provided to patients at those hospitals. When that happens, patients suffer. I also see many instances in which doctors at smaller hospitals request to transfer patients to our hospital. Often the reason for such transfers is that specialists are not available to provide care in the local hospital. Many doctors do not wish to be on call because of concerns about liability. Results of national and regional surveys have shown critical shortages of specialists in ENT, neurosurgery, neurology, gastroenterology, plastic surgery, hand surgery, ophthalmology and other specialties. Recently we are seeing shortages in core specialties such as general surgery and orthopedics. Liability protection of our physicians is essential to keep many of our community hospitals functioning and open. If they have to transfer so many services to larger hospitals, they will eventually close and people will not be able to receive the care they need close to home. This legislation will protect those doctors from having fear of being sued. It will protect the fabric of care for our citizens.

I believe that the most important reason for developing liability reform for healthcare is access to care for all people. This legislation is an important step in that process.

Thomas W. Turbiak, MD, FACEP