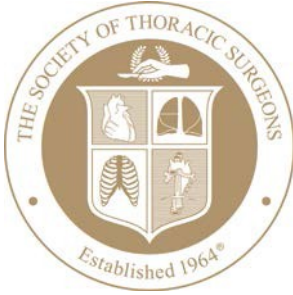


May 17, 2017

Congressman Richard Hudson  
429 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515



## The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

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### RE: Accessible Care by Curbing Excessive Lawsuits (ACCESS) Act of 2017

Dear Congressman Hudson:

On behalf of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), I write to thank you for introducing the Accessible Care by Curbing Excessive Lawsuits (ACCESS) Act of 2017 (HR 1704). Founded in 1964, STS is an international not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,000 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals in 90 countries who are dedicated to ensuring the best surgical care for patients with diseases of the heart, lungs, and other organs in the chest. The mission of the Society is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.

Medical liability reform is critical to shielding physicians from frivolous law suits and ensuring patient safety. The current system encourages the practice of defensive medicine, promotes the erosion of patient-centered care, and drives up the cost of health care nationwide. Excessive tort claims also affect the cardiothoracic surgical workforce as increasing numbers of medical students choose careers in fields with lower liability insurance costs, thus contributing to the projected shortage of surgical specialists.

STS supports reforms to help lower the costs of malpractice insurance and reduce the incidence of defensive medicine, while ensuring that patients injured by true malpractice are compensated fairly for their losses. Your multipronged approach will go far towards addressing the needs of both consumers and providers of health care. By combining patient-centered aspects—like apology guidance and attorney restrictions—with traditional methods that states have already found effective, such as a statute of limitations cap and collateral source rules, HR 1704 would make a positive difference.

STS remains fully committed to improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of care for all patients. We look forward to working with you to ensure a medical liability system that protects both patients and physicians. If you have any questions, please contact STS Director of Government Relations, Courtney Yohe at 202-787-1222 or [cyohe@sts.org](mailto:cyohe@sts.org).

Sincerely,

Richard L Prager, MD  
President