



AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION
of CRITICAL-CARE
NURSES

March 4, 2009

Suzanne Wedel M.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Boston MedFlight
1727 Robins Street, Hangar 1727
Hanscom Air Force Base
Bedford, MA 01730

Dear Dr. Wedel:

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses endorses H.R. 978, the Helicopter Medical Services (HMS) Patient Safety, Protection and Coordination Act sponsored by Representatives Jason Altmire and Candice Miller. This crucial legislation will ensure that patient safety, quality patient care and coordination of helicopter medical services (HMS) may be properly overseen by state emergency medical services (EMS) and public health authorities.

The public expects that should they be so critically ill or injured as to require helicopter medical services, that their patient care needs will be met in flight, that they will be safely transported, and that they will be moved in a timely and coordinated fashion to the hospital that can best care for them. Just as states regulate all other aspects of health care, so too should states be able to assure the patient safety, protection and coordination of HMS.

Unfortunately, while states clearly are empowered to oversee ground medical transportation, state oversight over helicopter medical services is much less defined. Over the past few years, the appropriate boundary between state and federal oversight of HMS has been undermined by the use of the federal Airline Deregulation Act preemption provision to overturn numerous public health and patient safety laws governing HMS. As a result, there are gaps, overlaps and vagaries between the federal government's oversight over the *aviation* aspects of HMS and the states' oversight over the *medical* aspects which threaten patient safety, the quality of patient care, and impede the proper coordination of helicopter medical services.

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Medical helicopters are not air taxis, they are ambulances that move by air. Patients transported by helicopter air ambulances must be transported in a safe and coordinated manner and receive high quality critical care during flight. AACN believes it is imperative that Congress clarify the ability of states to govern helicopter air ambulances within their boundaries (just as they currently do for ground ambulances) while continuing to recognize the important federal role in aviation oversight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caryl Goodyear-Bruch".

Caryl Goodyear-Bruch, RN,PhD,CCRN
President