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PFAA Chairman Testifies Before House Committee Hearing on Helicopter Medical Services

Washington, DC – Tom Judge, Chairman of the Patient First Air-Ambulance Alliance (PFAA) described critical problems in the helicopter medical safety arena today in testimony before the House Aviation Subcommittee hearing on Helicopter Medical Services (HMS). Judge went on to outline proposed solutions to address these problems, build a better helicopter medical services system and improve patient safety aboard air ambulances.

"HMS is an essential emergency service within the EMS system — more akin to a public utility than an enterprise. In an emergency, the public must trust that every decision on their behalf is made strictly on the basis of best medical and aviation practice," Tom Judge CCT-P, chairman of PFAA and executive director of LifeFlight of Maine said in his testimony.

Judge continued, "it is extremely regrettable that HMS has ended up on the NTSB's "10 Most Wanted" list. While significant progress is being made in improving air medical safety, more must be done. A strictly voluntary approach in which individual providers define their own standards is not working. While the FAA must oversee aviation safety, states must be permitted to regulate ambulances. HMS is the only area of aviation where the states have a role and legitimate interest because the passenger is a patient receiving critical care. State regulation over "medical" is more than simply the medical care provided inside a helicopter. State regulation must encompass the entirety of helicopter medical services, meaning system integration, coordination, and quality."

Gaps in the oversight over HMS and lack of clarity over the degree to which states may regulate HMS has greatly compromised patient safety. States have clear authority to oversee ground medical transport, but state oversight of helicopter medical transport is less defined. The *Helicopter Medical Services Patient Safety, Protection and Coordination Act*, S. 848 and H.R. 978 establishes a clear boundary between federal and state regulatory oversight and will help improve patient safety, protection and coordination.

To view a copy of Judge's prepared testimony please visit www.patientfirstalliance.org.

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The Patient First Air-Ambulance Alliance (PFAA) is a grassroots organization of medical and aviation providers committed to ensuring that critically ill and injured patients have access to the safest and highest quality air medical system possible. PFAA is comprised of air-medical

providers, community and business leaders, professional medical organizations, state EMS and Health Agencies, hospitals, and FAA part 135 certificate holders that are committed to improving the safety of air medical transport.