

PATIENT FIRST AIR AMBULANCE ALLIANCE

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PFAA Applauds Altmire Leadership on Key Legislation to Improve Patient Safety

Washington, DC - The Patient First Air Ambulance Alliance (PFAA) praised Congressman Jason Altmire (D-PA) today for his leadership on the *Helicopter Medical Services (HMS) Patient Safety, Protection and Coordination Act* (Act). This key legislation, which will be introduced this week, would protect patients by assuring state emergency medical services (EMS) and public health authorities may properly oversee patient safety, quality patient care and coordination of helicopter medical services (HMS).

"We applaud the leadership of Congressman Altmire for representing patient interests by introducing the HMS Patient Safety, Protection and Coordination Act," said Tom Judge CCT-P, chairman of PFAA and executive director of LifeFlight of Maine. "Patient care and safety is a must in assuring the public of a system they can trust. Careful integration of medical helicopters into the EMS and hospital system is a top priority and ensuring the balance between federal and state regulatory oversight is essential to a safe, effective, and quality air medical system."

States have clear authority to oversee ground medical transport, but state oversight of helicopter medical transport is less defined. The Act clarifies the ability of a state to regulate the number of air ambulance providers operating in a given state or service area within a State, the destinations of patient transport, minimum coverage and coordination standards, and the quality of medical care provided by in the air medical system. The legislation does not mandate action by States, but recognizes their long standing role in overseeing the practice of medicine within their borders and assures a level playing field for all providers. Finally, the legislation recognizes the FAA's clear mandates to oversee and regulate the safety of air carriers while clarifying that State EMS and health authorities have clear mandates to oversee and regulate the provision of medical care including helicopter air ambulances.

"Critically ill or injured patients who require air medical transport often need live-saving care while they are in-flight," Congressman Altmire said. "For years, states have been in charge of regulating air ambulance services, but now their ability to do this is being jeopardized. My legislation will protect patients by protecting states' power to ensure air ambulance services are properly coordinated with other emergency services and are equipped to meet patients' critical care needs."

This key legislation will be introduced as the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) holds a 4-day public hearing on the safety of Helicopter Emergency Medical Services operations. Judge testified before the NTSB Tuesday, February 3 during the panel on Operational Structure and Models and will testify again February 5.

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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.