

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4326

September 6, 2006

Our emergency and trauma services need your support
Cosponsor H.R. 5555

Dear Colleague,

Our emergency rooms are filled with dedicated, hard-working Americans who often do not have the proper resources available to respond to a mass casualty event. In the midst of another hurricane season, a possible flu pandemic, or the threat of a terrorist strike, are our emergency rooms prepared? The Institute of Medicine's 2006 report on The Future of Emergency Care points to several deficiencies in emergency preparedness. The time to act is now.

Emergency departments (EDs) and trauma centers are overcrowded. ED visits are increasing, while the number of EDs has declined. Patients end up being 'boarded' in the ED while they wait for hospital beds. Ambulances are frequently diverted.

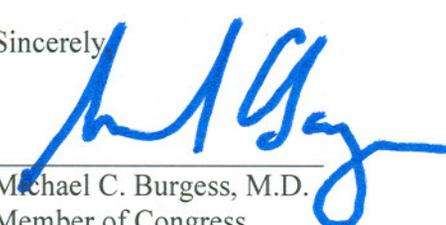
Emergency care is highly fragmented. Cities are often served by multiple 911 call centers. Agencies that provide emergency medical services (EMS) do not coordinate with EDs and trauma centers. EMS does not communicate effectively with public safety agencies and public health departments. There are no nationwide standards for the training of EMS personnel. Federal responsibility for oversight of EMS and trauma is scattered across multiple agencies.

Critical specialists are often unavailable to provide emergency and trauma care. Key specialties are in short supply. On-call specialists often treat emergency patients without compensation, and face higher medical liability.

The emergency care system is ill-prepared to handle a major disaster. There is little surge capacity for natural disaster, disease outbreak, or terrorist attack. EMTs in non-fire based services receive less than one hour of disaster response training. Hospital and EMS personnel lack personal protective equipment to respond to chemical, biological, or nuclear threats.

Please join us in solving this problem and **cosponsor H.R. 5555, the Trauma Care Systems Planning and Development Act of 2006.** This bill will provide needed planning grants to state trauma systems to improve the coordination of emergency departments and bolster the safety net from point of injury, through transportation, to triage and treatment. For more information, contact Kimberly Stump with Dr. Burgess' office at 5-7772 or kimberly.stump@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely


Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress

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