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Coalition for Patients' Rights Formed to Ensure Patient Access, Choice of Health Care Providers

Washington, DC – In response to divisive efforts by the American Medical Association (AMA) and other physician groups to limit the ability of licensed health care professionals to provide care to millions of patients, the newly formed Coalition for Patients' Rights (CPR) today urged all health care professionals to work together to counter the AMA's actions.

The CPR was formed to ensure that the growing needs of the American health system can be met and that patients have access to quality health care providers of their choice. The coalition represents more than 3 million licensed professionals who provide a diverse array of safe, effective and affordable health care services.

In a joint statement endorsed by the 25 health care groups* that comprise the coalition, the CPR expressed concern about the negative impact on patients if their ability to seek care from advanced practice nurses, psychologists, nurse midwives, chiropractors, and many other licensed, qualified health care providers is limited. The coalition is calling on the AMA and other physician groups aligned with the AMA to cease their divisive efforts to oppose the established practice rights of CPR members. The coalition also seeks an end to legislation at the state level that would reduce provider options for patients.

The CPR is especially concerned about efforts by the AMA and other physician groups that have formed the "Scope of Practice Partnership" to study the work and qualifications of "allied health professionals" in rural and underserved areas.

"Limiting the ability of health care professionals to practice and provide appropriate care will place an enormous burden on the health care system," remarked Barbara Blakeney, MS, RN, President of the American Nurses Association, which is a member of the coalition. "As leaders of the health community, this coalition seeks to maintain the broadest range of provider choices for everyone," said Blakeney.

The coalition questions the objectives of the AMA and other physician organizations when they seek to advise consumers, regulators, policymakers and insurers on the ability of other health care professionals to offer the services they are allowed by law to provide. Health care providers are a critical source of care for patients throughout the United States, especially those who live in rural areas and medically underserved urban areas. Historically, people who live in rural areas have relied on a strong array of practitioners to meet their health care needs. Advanced practice registered nurses, social workers, and other professions that require rigorous educational preparation and ongoing instruction and certification are the backbone of not just the rural health care system, but the entire health care structure in the United States.

“Organizations representing medical doctors (MDs) and doctors of osteopathy (DOs) are not in the best position to conduct a balanced and fair assessment of an issue that directly affects their reimbursement,” said Mitchell H. Tobin, JD, Senior Director of Professional Practice Affairs for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, also a member of the coalition.

The coalition asserts that the AMA’s actions affect the entire health care community and all current and potential patients.

“Health care professionals other than MDs and DOs have been key to assuring access to care for millions of patients in rural and underserved areas. Given the difficulty that so many people have in getting needed care, now is the time for all health care professions to work together, not to work against each other to meet the need,” said Dr. Russ Newman, PhD, JD, Executive Director for Professional Practice of the American Psychological Association.

The Coalition for Patients’ Rights is continuing to expand and invites other health care organizations to join.