American Trauma Society

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February 26, 2014

The Honorable Michael Burgess
U.S. House of Representatives
1721 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
U.S. House of Representatives
2335 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Burgess and Green:

On behalf of the thousands of trauma centers, trauma care providers and trauma patients of the American Trauma Society, I would like to thank you for introducing the Trauma Systems and Regionalization of Emergency Care Reauthorization Act and express our strong support for the passage of this legislation. As you know, this bill would reauthorize the programs that provide grants to states for planning, implementing, and developing trauma care systems, and establish pilot projects to design, implement, and evaluate innovative models of emergency care systems. We sincerely appreciate your continued leadership in recognizing the importance of these systems of care in saving lives.

The June 2006 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, the Future of Emergency Care in the United States Health System, found that hospital emergency departments and trauma centers across the country are severely overcrowded, emergency care is highly fractured, and critical surgical specialists are often unavailable to provide emergency and trauma care. To alleviate this situation, the IOM called for a complete overhaul of our nation's emergency and trauma care by creating a coordinated and regionalized system of care modeled after the Trauma Systems program.

Ideally, trauma and emergency care systems respond quickly and efficiently to ensure that seriously injured individuals receive the appropriate treatment within the "golden hour" – the time period when medical intervention is most effective at saving lives and function. However, unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death for people aged 1-44 years and, unfortunately, access to well-functioning trauma systems is inconsistent throughout the country. In fact, 45 million people lack access to a trauma center within the "golden hour." The Trauma Systems and Regionalization of Emergency Care Reauthorization Act is consistent with the goals set forth by the IOM and helps establish the systems that save lives and improve function.

We urge swift passage of this important legislation. Your acknowledgement of the need to ensure that these systems are available to all Americans is greatly appreciated, and we thank you again for your leadership and commitment to these crucial programs.

Sincerely,

Ian P. Weston
Executive Director