

Bronx Independent Living Services  
Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled  
Brooklyn-wide Interagency Council of the Aging  
Center for Independence of the Disabled in New York  
Center for Justice & Democracy  
Center for Medical Consumers  
Citizen Action of New York  
Coalition of Institutionalized Aged & Disabled  
Commission on the Public's Health System  
Consumers Union  
Density Education National Survivors Network (D.E.N.S.E. NY)  
Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York  
Disabilities Network of New York City  
Empire State Consumer Project  
Faithful Response  
Feal Good Foundation  
Gay Men's Health Crisis  
Gray Panthers, NYC Network  
Harlem Consumer Rights Coalition  
Harlem Independent Living Center  
Long Term Care Community Coalition  
Make the Road New York  
MFY Legal Services  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest  
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)  
New York Statewide Senior Action Council  
New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment  
Niagara Health Quality Coalition  
Peggy Lillis Memorial Foundation  
PULSE of New York

January 8, 2015

To the Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

As New York-based nonprofit organizations concerned about people's healthcare rights, we write to urge that you make patient safety a top Congressional priority this upcoming session.

Patients rightly expect that healthcare providers will provide good quality, safe healthcare. Yet, as we know, research published by the Institute of Medicine, the Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services, and the *Journal of Patient Safety* as well as others has determined that, each year, hundreds of thousands of patients die and many more are injured because of substandard healthcare that they receive in American hospitals. Unfortunately, far too often the policy discussion is focused not on how best to reduce avoidable harm but instead on ill-advised proposals to impair the public's right to know about the risks that medical consumers face in encounters with the healthcare system, and to weaken the legal rights of injured patients and their families.

We urge you to preserve the public right of access to view, analyze and share data provided to the federal government on adverse events or outcomes in healthcare and other data relevant to healthcare quality. The public needs more “user-friendly” access to information on healthcare safety, not less. We further urge you to protect the individual patient’s right to seek justice from the court when neglectful care and preventable harm have occurred. The common law right of injured patients to access their state’s judicial system for accountability must not be impaired or impeded by federal legislation.

Finally, the Affordable Care Act (“ACA”) has addressed critical problems in healthcare insurance, such as the denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions, and made health insurance coverage possible for millions of people. The ACA and the Medicare and Medicaid programs also contain provisions designed to improve safety in healthcare. These include, for example, the denial of payment for “never” events, which are incidents that should not occur in healthcare, such as patient death or serious disability associated with a medication error (e.g., the wrong drug, wrong dose, wrong preparation or other error). We urge you to protect patients’ rights and patient-oriented safety programs under federal healthcare laws.

Thank you for your consideration of these critical issues in healthcare. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues further. If you have questions, comments, or would like to arrange a meeting, please contact Arthur Levin, Center for Medical Consumers, 917-836-7596; Suzanne Mattei, New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment, 646-278-5689; or Blair Horner, New York Public Interest Research Group, 518-436-0876 (x257).

With best regards,

The 30 undersigned organizations:

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