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Medical  
Association  
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## **For Immediate Release**

### **MAG LAUDS GENERAL SURGERY AS “SINGLE SPECIALITY”**

**ATLANTA (Jan. 4, 2008)** – Medical Association of Georgia President, Dr. Jack M. Chapman Jr., praises the recent ruling by the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) that classifies general surgery as a “single specialty,” allowing general surgeons to open ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) which are more convenient for patients and cost about one-third less than the same procedure in a hospital.

Chapman underscores that it “will increase patient safety and convenience while at the same time lower health care costs.”

The new rule gives general surgeons the same exemption already given other surgeons (i.e. orthopedic surgeons) from Georgia’s archaic Certificate of Need statute. Chapman says, “This brings Georgia in line with the other 49 states which recognize general surgery as a single specialty.”

“General surgeons can now operate outside of the hospital setting without having to ‘prove there is a need’ for their services. Why should general surgeons have to prove there is a need for their services, when proprietors of everything from barbecue restaurants to muffler shops are exempt from such a burden?” Chapman asks.

“Opponents of classifying general surgeons as a single specialty claim the ruling will force hospitals to close, but are unable to offer any evidence from any state of a hospital going out of business because general surgeons opened an ASC,” the MAG president says.

Georgia’s general surgeons already provide thousands of hours of uncompensated indigent and charity care to patients in hospital emergency rooms and trauma centers. Physicians, not hospitals, treat patients. With the new ruling, MAG believes patients who can be treated by a general surgeon in an ASC will similarly benefit from outpatient treatment options at convenient times and locations at affordable rates.

“Proponents of government-directed health care seem to fear the lower costs and higher efficiencies inherent in a more market-oriented health care system that includes consumer choice. Obviously, maintaining the status quo does not serve Georgia’s health care needs,” Chapman says.

MAG applauds the recent DCH ruling, which sends a message to medical school graduates that they can practice trauma care and general surgery in Georgia with more freedom from the heavy hand of government protected monopolies.

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