

1849 The Exchange
Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30339
678.303.9290
800.282.0224
Fax 678.303.3732
www.mag.org



Medical
Association
of Georgia

Building a Better State of Health Since 1849

FOR RELEASE JUNE 25, 2009

Contact Tom Kornegay at 404.405.2433 or tkornegay@mag.org

**MAG PRESIDENT TO TELL CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE THAT RIGHT FOR PATIENTS
AND PHYSICIANS TO CONTRACT IS THE KEY TO HEALTH CARE REFORM**

ATLANTA – M. Todd Williamson, M.D., the president of the Medical Association of Georgia (MAG), will tell the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Energy and Commerce today that giving patients the right to enter into private contractual agreements with their physician is the single most important step that lawmakers can take to reform the country's health care system.

"This will empower patients to choose their own physician...and it will let them make their own medical decisions," the Lawrenceville-based neurologist will tell lawmakers during the hearing to address the House-sponsored health care legislation "discussion draft."

Dr. Williamson says his comments will be consistent with a coalition of 20 state medical and specialty societies that represent more than 100,000 physicians from across the U.S. He adds that the coalition sponsored a resolution at the recent American Medical Association (AMA) House of Delegates meeting that solidified a patient's right to privately contract with his or her physician as an advocacy priority. He says that the coalition members believe that a competitive environment is the key to preserving the "world's best health care system."

"If private contracting was allowed, every patient would have access to every doctor," Dr. Williamson will point out in his testimony. He says that each patient's unique health insurance coverage circumstances can serve as the baseline for the discussion between patient and physician. In his testimony, Dr. Williamson will call for tax incentives and individual "portable" insurance policies. He will say that, "When all Americans control their own (health insurance) policies, insurance companies will be forced to compete for the business of millions of individuals, and they will focus on satisfying the patient...not the patient's employer."

Dr. Williamson will stress that the House legislation is based on some faulty assumptions, including the theory that there's no relationship between health care expenditures and outcomes. He also will tell lawmakers that U.S. health expenditures are in line with other countries when evaluated on an "apples-to-apples" basis. And, he will say that U.S. health outcomes are the best in the world.

Dr. Williamson promoted the patient-physician relationship and free market solutions when he testified on behalf of the coalition before the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health in March. With 6,600 members, MAG is the leading voice for physicians in Georgia. Dr. Williamson's written testimony is available at www.mag.org. The hearing will air as a live Web cast beginning at 9:30 a.m. at <http://energycommerce.house.gov>.

###