

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2009

Join Us in Helping Secure Access to Critical Care Doctors

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to invite you to be an original co-sponsor of the Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act, which seeks to address the growing shortage of critical care physicians.

In its May 2006 report to Congress entitled, "The Critical Care Workforce: A Study of the Supply and Demand for Critical Care Physicians," the Health Resources and Services Administration found that projected future demand for critical care services would not be met. To staff intensive care units (ICU) with critical care doctors, a total of 4,300 intensivist physicians will be needed when only 2,800 are available. The Leapfrog Group (a health care innovation group made up of America's leading employers) has documented that significant improvement in outcomes –in both quality and cost – results when a critically ill or injured patient is treated by an intensivist.

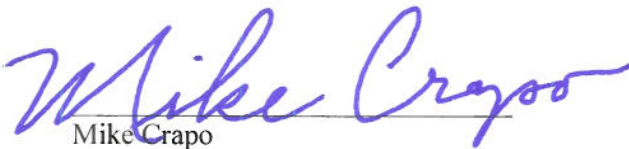
Unfortunately, only one-third of our critically ill citizens are treated by physicians and nurses specifically trained to manage their complex health issues. With a greater use of intensivists, an estimated 54,000 deaths that currently occur in ICUs could be avoided.

The Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act seeks to optimize the critical care services available today, while expanding the pool of critical care providers. The bill calls for an assessment of "best practices" for critical care medicine. It authorizes demonstration projects in ICU services and family-centered, multi-disciplinary approaches to improve the quality of care delivered and best make use of existing resources. In addition, the bill expands telemedicine opportunities for rural communities and other medically underserved areas. Finally, to address the supply problem, the bill would allow for the National Health Service Corps to support and encourage critical care providers to practice in medically underserved areas.

The Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act is strongly endorsed by the key medical specialty societies and patient groups involved in critical care medicine, including the American College of Chest Physicians, the American Thoracic Society, the Society for Critical Care Medicine, the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, and the National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care.

Please join us in co-sponsoring the Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act. Please contact Katie Oppenheim with Senator Crapo at 4.6142 or Jordanna Davis with Senator Whitehouse at 4.2921 if you have any questions or would like to co-sponsor this important legislation.

Sincerely,


Mike Crapo


Sheldon Whitehouse