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September 10, 2009

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The Board of Trustees of the Medical Society of New Jersey (MSNJ) held its Board meeting at St. Peter's University Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ. During the course of that meeting the Board adjourned to watch President Obama's speech to the Joint Session of Congress on Health Care. We were pleased to hear the President direct the Department of Health and Human Services to move forward on "state-based demonstration projects" to evaluate the effectiveness of certain medical liability reforms. Our Board voted unanimously to urge your office to select New Jersey as the first state to test these initiatives.

MSNJ is offering its services to assist DHHS to implement programs that will promote patient safety and significantly reduce the practice of "defensive medicine". MSNJ understands that no concrete plan has been established and that there are a wide range of ideas as to how we accomplish these goals. We enthusiastically support the President's position that we must "put patient safety first and let doctors focus on practicing medicine."

In order for the practicing physicians in New Jersey, and across the United States, to get back to focusing on medicine, we need to address the litigious environment that impedes our desire to focus solely on the physician-patient relationship. Please know that MSNJ stands committed to assist the DHHS in demonstration projects that will benefit the reform of our healthcare system.

Thank you for your commitment to the health of our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph H. Reichman, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joseph H. Reichman, MD
217th President

/jc