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MEDIA RELEASE

Malpractice Victims Denounce Insurer's Plan to Take Away Victims Rights- Demand that Insurance Companies Open Their Books

Springfield, IL- Hours after Illinois malpractice insurers announced proposed legislation that would take away patients' rights by capping damage awards, victims of medical malpractice denounced the plan, calling upon insurers to open their books. The Center for Justice and Democracy (CJ&D) is demanding that they disclose information to legislators and the public that they have kept secret as to why their rates have been skyrocketing. Malpractice victims Jeannie Boullion, Mary Steinberg, and Pamela Thomas gathered with the Center for Justice and Democracy Staff Director, Amber Hard to share their reaction to the insurers' proposal.

"It is outrageous that ISMIE, the state's largest insurer of doctors, would propose a bill that would devastate patients and families without opening their books to justify the egregious rate increases with which they have hit doctors," said Amber Hard, from the Center for Justice and Democracy (CJ&D).

CJ&D has asked the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation-Division of Insurance to release information from ISMIE's books. Information requested includes actuarial tables, the data used to set their rates. "Although such information is public in many states, the Division of Insurance has denied our request because state law requires ISMIE's approval. ISMIE claims the documents are trade secret, proprietary, privileged, and confidential. Since ISMIE is leading the charge to change our civil justice system, it's time for them to prove if the data justifies their rate hikes," added Hard.

In addition to recommending public scrutiny of ratemaking practices, CJ&D is calling on the legislature to pass meaningful insurance reform. Such reform includes: giving the Division of Insurance the power to roll back current rates and investigate and deny future rate increases, making actuarial data public, and requiring annual audits of insurance company finances to insure they are not engaging in risky investment strategies.