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VIRGINIA PATIENTS INJURED BY MEDICAL MALPRACTICE ASK SENATE TO PROTECT PATIENTS' RIGHTS IN HEALTH CARE BILL

DECRY ATTACKS BY REP. ERIC CANTOR AND OTHERS

RICHMOND – As the Senate health care bill is set for debate this Saturday, nearly a dozen survivors of medical malpractice and their families appeared at a news conference today expressing extreme concern that the rights of medical malpractice victims have become a political football in the debate over health care.

In particular, the group decried attacks on patients' rights during the House health care debate. The group is asking Virginia's Senators to support patients' legal rights as the Senate health care debate begins. They plan on meeting with Senate staff later this afternoon.

"Many families have been devastated due to medical negligence," said Lisa Searcy of Scottsville, whose 4-year-old daughter died following a botched surgery. "The way to solve the problem of medical malpractice is to focus on patient safety and reducing errors, not taking away our rights."

Bettie Wilson, whose daughter is in a vegetative state due to an anesthesiology error in Alexandria, said, "As survivors of medical negligence, we believe that our voices should be heard and considered in any discussion that could result in further curbing the legal rights of seriously injured patients."

Jackie Martin of Charlotte Courthouse, whose undiagnosed bowel perforation led to serious harm and numerous surgeries, and whose jury verdict was capped by Virginia law, said, "The government has people on their side. We need people on our side, to protect us from harm. Our rights should not be taken away. We must be protected."

The event was facilitated by the Center for Justice & Democracy, a nonprofit consumer rights groups that works to educate the public about the importance of the civil justice system and patient safety.

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