



## **Congress Should Protect Medical Volunteers During Disasters**

When Hurricane Katrina struck it “destroyed or degraded the capacity to deliver emergency care, primary care, [and] inpatient hospital services”<sup>1</sup> in the affected regions. Nearly 20 years later, and with an “above-normal”<sup>2</sup> hurricane season predicted this year, the federal government has still not taken significant steps to ensure medical volunteers are encouraged to quickly respond to future disasters. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress had the foresight to encourage more medical volunteers by enacting, through the CARES Act, limited civil liability protections for medical volunteers responding to the outbreak. If similar protections were adopted to address future disasters and health emergencies proactively, it would be possible to more quickly and effectively respond to large-scale events with their associated healthcare needs. The *Good Samaritan Health Professionals Act* would address this issue before the next dire emergency occurs, which is particularly critical at a time when efforts to reshape the Federal Emergency Management Agency are ongoing.

### **“Good Samaritan Health Professionals Act”**

- Provides limited civil liability protection to volunteer healthcare professionals who treat victims of a federally declared disaster or public health emergency.
- Protects medical volunteers who respond to disasters/health emergencies whether they volunteer as individuals or as part of a relief entity’s response efforts.
- Ensures that disaster victims will have more timely access to trained healthcare providers.
- Preserves a victim’s access to compensation in the event of an injury that results from an act or omission by the provider that constitutes willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the victim.
- Enhances clarity regarding the patchwork of state laws encouraging medical volunteerism, thereby reducing risk and uncertainty for healthcare professionals.
- Eliminates the need for Congress to pass new protections for each future disaster or public health emergency.

### **Support the “Good Samaritan Health Professionals Act”**

For more information, please contact the MPL Association Government Relations Department at (301) 947-9000 or [governmentsrelations@MPLassociation.org](mailto:governmentsrelations@MPLassociation.org).

<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. (2013). *Addressing the Health Care Impact of Hurricane Katrina*, <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/7387-2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (May 22, 2025). *NOAA Predicts above-normal 2025 Atlantic hurricane season*, <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/noaa-predicts-above-normal-2025-atlantic-hurricane-season>