

Medical Liability Reforms Key to Texas Patient Access

On September 13 the Texas health care community recognizes the fifteenth anniversary of Texas' landmark medical liability reforms. Passed by the voters in 2003, Prop. 12, created a constitutional amendment affirming Texas' non-economic damage cap in medical liability lawsuits.

The cap has been a magnet in attracting a record number of new doctors to the state, said Dr. Howard Marcus, an Austin internist and chairman of the Texas Alliance for Patient Access. TAPA is the statewide coalition of doctors, hospitals, nursing homes, charity clinics, and physician liability carriers that helped draft and successfully lobbied for the passage of Texas' 2003 reforms.

The number of physicians who treat patients with complex illnesses and high-risk conditions has grown substantially because of the reforms, Dr. Marcus noted.

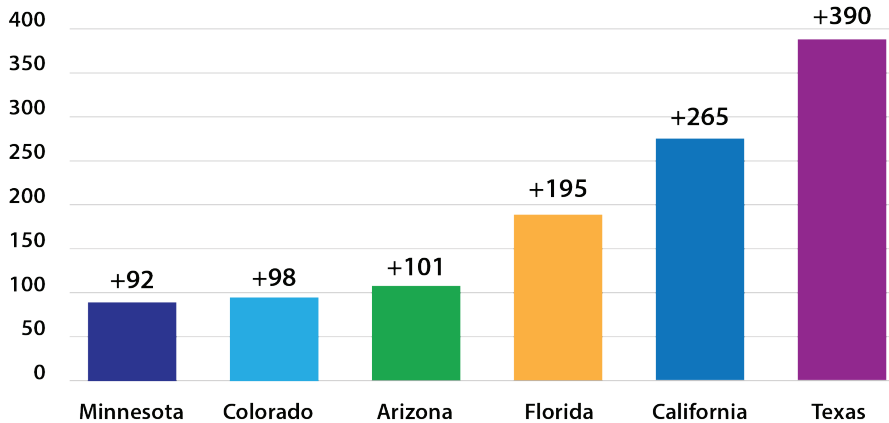
"Texas' medical liability reforms have been nationally considered the gold standard for medical liability legislation," said Governor Greg Abbott. "Tort reform has significantly reduced lawsuits and liability costs in our state and contributed greatly to the increasing number of doctors practicing in Texas."

Before the reforms, doctors were restricting their practice, avoiding the emergency room, leaving the state, or leaving practice altogether, said Dr. Marcus. For example, during the crisis years, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Lubbock, Temple and Waco all saw a massive loss of obstetricians, he said. Some obstetricians quit practicing, others stopped delivering babies and limited their practice to office visits to make skyrocketing insurance costs manageable. Since the reforms took place, Texas has added more obstetricians than any state in the nation, Dr. Marcus said.

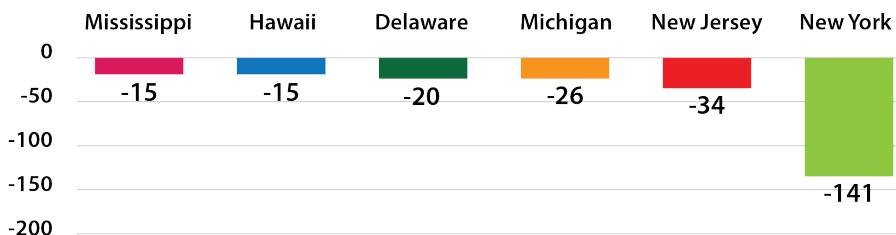
Net Change in Direct Patient Care Ob-Gyns 2006-2015

Nationwide / Net gain of 1,826

TOP GAINERS



BIGGEST LOSERS



"Because of the tort reform measures passed by the Texas Legislature in 2003, the number of Texas primary care, high-risk, and total physicians have expanded at a rate greater than population growth," Dr. Marcus said. "Physician sub-specialties that have seen robust growth include cardiologists, geriatricians, pediatricians, pediatric specialists, vascular surgeons, anesthesiologists, and emergency medicine physicians," said Dr. Marcus. "Maintaining this steady, annual three to five percent expansion in our state's physician workforce is critically important for improving access to medical care," noted TAPA Director Jon Opelt.

Source:
The Obstetrician- Gynecologist Workforce in the United States, 2017
Facts, Figures, and Implications
The American Congress of Obstetricians & Gynecologists
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