MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

HB 2120- Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act

Dear Members of the House Committee on Veteran’s Affairs and Emergency Preparedness:

The American College of Surgeons and the Pennsylvania Chapters of the American College of Surgeons are pleased to see that your committee is considering HB 2120 and supports the passage of the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act (UEVHPA). We hope that Pennsylvania will enact UEVHPA in 2012 and join the growing number of states adopting this important disaster response legislation.

The Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act (UEVHPA) was developed in response to the significant legal and licensing barriers to volunteer physicians and health care practitioners traveling to New Orleans, LA, and the Gulf Coast in response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. In 2007, the American College of Surgeons’ endorsed the UEVHPA as the College continues to extend its work in trauma and disaster planning and response.

Physicians are uniquely qualified to assist during disasters. In particular, surgeons, with their training in trauma and critical care, play a major role in our health care community’s response to most disaster situations. A critical element in this proposal is that trained and qualified surgeons
are able to enter a state to provide the necessary care when the size and scope of the disaster may be such that the local medical community is completely overwhelmed or severely incapacitated due to the disaster.

The UEVHPA establishes legal guidelines for recognizing other states’ licenses for physicians and health care practitioners who volunteer to provide assistance during the time of a declared emergency. Since federal provisions for interstate cooperation do not extend to most private practitioners, UEVHPA calls for the creation of a registration system that out-of-state practitioners may use either before or during a disaster. Upon successful registration, practitioners are expressly permitted to contribute their professional skills to existing organized disaster efforts. In addition, it addresses issues of workers’ compensation coverage and civil liability protections for physicians and other licensed health practitioners.

By enacting HB 2120, the Pennsylvania legislature can have a positive impact on disaster-response effectiveness. Removing barriers that prohibit licensed surgeons and other qualified responders from traveling across state lines to voluntarily administer medically necessary care during disasters will ensure the citizens of their state access to high-quality surgical services in the event of a crisis.

Thank you for your time and consideration of HB 2120. Please join us in support of HB 2120 by recommending this legislation be passed into state law.