

Honorable members of Congress:

I am writing in support of H.R. #2333, the Public Health Service Act to provide for a National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). I am a practicing emergency physician and a Supervising Medical Officer of the NDMS MA-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), and the new International Medical Surgical Response Team (IMSuRT). Although it is an honor and privilege to serve my country after disaster, assisting our citizens, the biggest challenge has been to find a way to leave my full time job on short notice (less than 12 hours) when the President orders the activation of the NDMS.

I have been a member of my DMAT for 10 years, during which time our team has responded to Miami after Hurricane Andrew, to St. Thomas after Hurricane Marilyn, to Atlanta during the Olympics, to upstate NY after the ice storms, to Alabama during Hurricane Georges, and to the US Capitol during the State of the Union Address, among many other deployments, treating thousands of patients and prepared to treat many thousands more. When I first joined the team the healthcare environment was entirely different from now, our physician group was much larger, and it was relatively easy to deploy rapidly. Now our group is much smaller and there is no longer the support there once was for me, or others in our team, just to pick up and go. The feature of this congressional bill that is so important to me and the other members of the NDMS is the provision to guarantee the protection of other federal employees during training and disaster deployments, most notably assurances that one's employer must allow team members leave to go, and guarantee of our jobs upon our return from service to country.

This issue is clearly one that transcends local politics or districts, or even political party affiliation. When disaster strikes it is crucial that those of us volunteering to assist the nation have the resources and backing from our government that allows us to respond effectively and assures that we may return to our previous positions at home afterwards. Therefore I thank you in advance for your consideration of this bill and anything that you can do to assure its passage. Please let me know if there is anything further that I can do to assist you to help us. Until then, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

--Frank Friedman, MD

Franklin D. Friedman, M.D.

New England Medical Center
Director of Emergency Clinical Operations
750 Washington Street, NEMC #311
Boston MA 02111
(617) 636-9625; fax: (617) 636-4723
ffriedman1@lifespan.org