February 8, 2011

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar,

The undersigned organizations write in support of S. 296, a bill that would help address the issues leading to shortages and provide the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with additional authority and information that will assist in preventing further drug shortages in the future. This legislation is a critical first step in addressing a serious public health problem and we appreciate your leadership in advancing solutions.

A growing number of drug shortages is presenting serious challenges to our members, who provide care to critically ill patients. The number of drugs in critically short supply is increasing at an alarming rate and threatens quality of care in hospitals and clinics nationwide. Many of these drugs play a critical role in life-saving treatments, including cancer therapies, widely used anesthetics, antimicrobials, and pain medications. In many cases, therapeutic alternatives are not available, or carry increased risk of severe side effects and drug-to-drug interactions. The potential harm to patient safety is of paramount concern.

Your proposed legislation would provide the FDA with tools to better manage—and hopefully prevent—shortages of life-saving medications. S 296 enables the FDA to work more effectively with supply chain entities to ensure drug availability, and enhances the Agency's ability to monitor drugs that are vulnerable to shortages in the future. The bill also enables FDA to work with drug manufacturers to establish contingency plans for manufacturing interruptions such as raw material shortages, adjustments to production capabilities, and discontinuations.

Again we thank you for your leadership on this issue and look forward to working with your office and other stakeholders toward passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Hospital Association
Institute for Safe Medication Practices
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists