September 18, 2000

The Honorable Cass Ballenger
Chairman
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Ballenger:

On behalf of Premier Inc., I am writing in strong support of the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act (HR. 5178), introduced on September 14, 2000. Your legislation updates the Bloodbourne Pathogens standard to extend the benefits of innovation in medical technology, such as safer medical devices, and to reduce occupational exposure in the health workplace.

Premier, Inc. is a strategic alliance of leading not-for-profit hospital and healthcare systems across the nation. Premier provides group purchasing programs and other services for more than 1,800 hospital and health service facilities. Premier prioritizes patient and healthcare worker safety in its pursuit and evaluation of contracts for clinical products and services. In addition, Premier has launched a variety of clinical performance and collaborative education initiatives to identify and spur the adoption of safer healthcare workplace practices, including measures to protect our health care workers from bloodborne pathogens.

By codifying the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) revised compliance directive for bloodborne pathogens, the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act underscores the importance of maintaining flexible, performance-driven, facility-specific strategies for the reduction of health risks associated with occupational exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials.

As OSHA Assistant Secretary Charles N. Jeffress testified in June before the Workforce Protections Subcommittee, the bloodborne pathogens standard, since its 1991 implementation, has been a success. Among other factors, the standard—particularly its requirement that employers provide vaccines for employees exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials—has contributed to a dramatic decline in the rate of occupationally acquired Hepatitis B infection. Your legislation would build upon this important trend.

Once again, Premier applauds the leadership and initiative you have displayed in this area. We look forward to working with you toward the enactment of this important healthcare safety initiative.

Sincerely,

Herb Kuhn
Vice President
Premier Advocacy

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