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**STATE BOARD OF MEDICINE RESPONDS TO TWO NATIONAL REPORTS
ON DOCTOR DISCIPLINE**

BOSTON- The Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) released its Annual Summary of Board Action yesterday, a compilation of data on physician licensure and disciplinary activities from 68 medical boards. Following the release of the Federation's report was the annual ranking of State Medical Boards across the country, also released yesterday by Ralph Nader and Sidney Wolfe of *Public Citizen*.

The FSMB report does not rank the performance of State Medical Boards; instead, it simply releases a compilation of data summarizing physician discipline by state. The *Public Citizen* report uses the FSMB data to create its rankings. Massachusetts placed thirty-ninth in the nation in the number of disciplinary actions taken in 1998 against doctors.

In response to these figures, Board of Registration in Medicine Chair Dr. Mary Anna Sullivan said, "We are pleased by the improved ranking in the Public Citizen figures. Board Chair Sullivan added that there are more to the numbers from the two reports than meets the eye. "The Board has other policies and programs in place that are improving health care quality, but are not reflected in the disciplinary numbers. Our Patient Care Assessment (PCA) Unit identifies and corrects breakdowns in the checks and balances of health care quality assurance programs in hospitals. The Board's Licensing Division prevents substandard physicians from attaining licensure in this state, and our Physician Profiles Program is nationally-recognized for its disclosure to the public of any disciplinary action(s) taken against a physician's license."

The Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine licenses more than 30,000 physicians, osteopaths and acupuncturists. The Board was created to protect the public health and safety by setting standards for the practice of medicine and by ensuring that doctors who practice in the Commonwealth are appropriately qualified and competent. The Board investigates complaints, holds hearings and determines sanctions.

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