



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Georgia Watch names Rep. Sharon Cooper a Friend of the Consumer**

*Congresswoman's dedication receives recognition from consumer watchdog group*

**ATLANTA** - Today Georgia Watch presented Representative Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) with the Friend of the Consumer Award for her dedication to passing legislation that puts one more consumer on the State Medical Board. Georgia's medical board is made up of 13 members, only one of which is a non-medical profession.

The Georgia State Medical Board was created by the Medical Practice Act to hold disciplinary hearings for alleged medical malpractice and negligence, and which had not been substantially updated in several decades. HB 509, sponsored by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), was a comprehensive rewrite of the Act intended to modernize the board's functions and structure. HB 509 also expanded the board to 15 members, with at least two of them from outside the medical profession.

**"Quote,"** Representative Cooper said. **"Quote."**

The passage of House Bill 509 was the culmination of four years of work by Georgia Watch to expand and diversify the membership of the State Medical Board, which licenses and disciplines Georgia physicians. Only one of the board's current 13 members is a non-doctor - most southeastern states have three or more non-doctor members on their boards.

**"Quote,"** Georgia Watch Executive Director Allison Wall said. **"Quote."**

The State Medical Board supported HB 509, but it was initially opposed by the Medical Association of Georgia. In contrast to past sessions, HB 509 created little controversy on the House and Senate floors. Gov. Perdue signed the bill into law on June 04.

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*Founded in 2002, Georgia Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501-(c)(3) watchdog group focusing on consumer education and research in the areas of health care, insurance, identity theft and personal finance. Visit [www.GeorgiaWatch.org](http://www.GeorgiaWatch.org) for more information.*