



Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA, Executive Vice President, CEO

July 23, 2008

The Honorable John D. Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell and Ranking Member Barton:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I would like to commend you for recognizing the importance of moving toward a connected, nationwide health information technology (HIT) infrastructure and the crucial role the federal government has in assisting the health care industry to enable and accelerate the adoption and implementation of HIT systems and tools. We are pleased to support your efforts to that end.

In order to achieve this reality, a coherent HIT environment will need to be highly connected, secure, affordable, and be integrated into the typical workflow of medical practices as diverse as those in large hospitals, community health centers, and rural solo practices. Your legislation, H.R. 6357, the "Protecting Records, Optimizing Treatment, and Easing Communication through Healthcare Technology Act of 2008," would be a significant step in that direction.

Studies have demonstrated that one of the greatest barriers to widespread physician adoption of HIT is the significant start-up and maintenance costs associated with electronic medical record systems (EMRs). H.R. 6357 contains provisions to incentivize the widespread adoption and use of HIT through grant programs. Meaningful grants, loans, and other financial incentives for acquiring, implementing, maintaining HIT systems and tools are essential for accelerating widespread adoption of HIT and we applaud your recognition of this fact.

As we continue to move toward the nationwide electronic exchange of health information, it is crucial that protecting the privacy of health information remain a central element.

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Therefore, we appreciate your efforts to expand the protections provided by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 Privacy and Security Rules (HIPAA) to directly cover additional parties involved in the electronic exchange, storage, use, or handling of health information that are not currently covered by HIPAA. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff as this bill moves through the legislative process to ensure that additional requirements do not unduly compromise the ability of treating providers to operate their practices, care for their patients, or to improve the safety and quality of the care provided.

The AMA appreciates your leadership in advancing HIT and looks forward to working with you on developing a national infrastructure that accelerates its widespread adoption.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mike Maves", is written over a thin red horizontal line.

Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA