



22 July 2009

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
Chairman, Senate HELP Committee
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Ranking Member, Senate HELP Committee
379 A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

We write today to support efforts to improve the efficiency and lower the cost of delivering high quality health care to Americans of all income levels.

Our collective organizations represent the vast majority of small, medium, and large technology companies in this country. We believe that technology and its application are vital to your important undertaking, and the best way to maximize the benefits of technology is to craft policies which maintain choice among technological solutions, while always meeting the necessary goal of enabling health providers to deploy the technologies that best meet their patients' needs.

Health IT should extend beyond the institutions to reach the patient wherever and whenever they need care. Today's model of healthcare is centered on requiring patients to maintain face-to-face consultations with providers, often for routine follow-ups, simple diagnostic evaluations and non-technical testing. The economic inefficiencies are enormous: employees miss work, employers lose productivity, travel requires substantial resources, care providers must divert time from those seriously ill and providers must spend time on face-to-face visits - distracting them from many of the activities so important to healthcare; prevention, disease management, and shared decision-making. Just as information technology has helped distribute and personalize much of our lives, let the technology revolutionize how to keep people healthy. Technology can allow more flexible care models and transactions and a richer variety of "encounters" that fit the clinical, relational, motivational, and financial needs of patients and providers - healthcare transactions, interactions and responsibilities should happen in home or on the move.

The end result should be empowering patients by provision of access to data about them which is rightly the central focus of healthcare activity and initiatives. Therefore, significant and measurable improvements in population health through a transformed health care delivery system, a vision in which all patients are fully engaged and empowered in their healthcare through real time access to all medical information and linked to care coordination and population health, must be the central focus.

In order to ensure that America has the best health IT solutions, we encourage you to consider the following principles:

1. Support incentives to encourage providers to use interoperable IT systems that enable data portability and protection of patient information and privacy.

We support offering incentives, loans, grants and other funding mechanisms to health care providers to assist them in implementing electronic health and medical records systems and other Health IT systems that will help reduce health care costs and medical errors while improving quality of care and access to all Americans.

In order to reach these goals, the U.S. health care system must be encouraged to adopt open standards-based interoperable electronic health information systems, including but not limited to, electronic health records.

2. Support greater broadband deployment in health care settings, tele-health, for both wired and wireless.

Increased broadband deployment will allow a health care provider to interact with a patient over a live feed and to provide remote consulting as a substitute for in person visits. Enhanced broadband capability will also allow the transmission of diagnostic images, video information, and patient data to remote specialists for viewing on-demand. Additionally, this capability will allow for the utilization of wireless services to attending clinicians for on-line bedside reviews and updating of patients' records. Adequate reimbursement is essentially for the rapid and broad-based deployment of these technologies.

3. Encourage the development of user-friendly, computer-related technologies, coupling these developments with user training and physician support services.

Partnerships with health care professionals and state licensing authorities to encourage licensing reciprocity for physicians and nurses to encourage widespread adoption of health IT. Actively work to involve physicians, regional health care systems, and other health care practitioners in HIT development.

4. Market competition is the best way to encourage innovation and enhance our health care system.

While there are several challenges ahead to realize a nationwide electronic healthcare system that promise can only be addressed and those challenges overcome by allowing the marketplace to operate. Technological mandates of any sort only hinder innovation and work against efficient solutions, whether a mandate for or against a particular technology, product, or development model. In health IT procurement, as in all procurement, IT solutions should instead be procured based on objective criteria such as effective end results.

Establishing a widely deployed and effective health IT infrastructure is going to require everyone's participation which leads to greater innovation through new ideas, better quality and enhanced service to customers. Our members are committed to creating innovative solutions today; all they need is a level playing field to compete and excel.

We look forward to an opportunity to discuss these issues in more detail. If you have any questions, or if we can be of service in any way, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Hawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" being more prominent than the last name "Hawley".

Jim Hawley
Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Acting CEO
TechNet

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip J. Bond". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with the first name "Phillip" and last name "Bond" being clearly identifiable.

Phillip J. Bond
President
TechAmerica