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The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and members of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), we sincerely appreciate your service and commitment to ensuring the transformation of healthcare through information technology (IT). As you work to finalize healthcare reform legislation in Congress, we ask that you consider our recommendations for health IT. Our recommendations for health IT's role in healthcare reform have been updated since initially released in December 2008 to better reflect new initiatives included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and healthcare reform legislation considered this year by the House Energy and Commerce and Ways and Committees and the Senate Finance and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committees.

HIMSS focuses exclusively on ensuring the optimal use of health IT and management systems for the betterment of healthcare. Founded in 1961, HIMSS represents more than 23,000 individual members – of which 73% work in provider settings – and over 380 corporate members that collectively represent organizations employing millions of people.

HIMSS believes that health IT is an enabler for broad-scale healthcare reform. Health IT provides a mechanism to achieve the intent of healthcare reform by improving access to and the quality of healthcare, while lowering costs, empowering consumers in their healthcare decisions, and ensuring the privacy and security of personal health information.

HIMSS believes that healthcare reform legislation should:

1. Leverage health IT to promote quality improvement, performance improvement, and cost containment. Health IT, as an enabler for healthcare reform, should relate payment to use of evidence-based practice/quality measurement/clinical decision support, utilize comparative effectiveness to achieve improvements in safety and quality outcomes, and apply health IT to strengthen patient-provider communications;
2. Provide for a solid infrastructure for health IT that harnesses strong federal leadership and the standardized electronic exchange of health information; and
3. Apply health IT as a means of increasing consumer and provider access to healthcare services and information, optimizing the efficiency of care payments, protecting the privacy and security of health information, and improving quality and safety.



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We support the following themes included in healthcare reform legislation to date: 1) expand incentive programs to foster the meaningful use of certified health IT; 2) train the work force to successfully select, implement, and manage healthcare information systems; 3) regularly update the standards, implementation specifications, and operating rules for the electronic exchange and use of health IT for purposes of financial and administrative simplification; and 4) leverage health IT in care coordination activities.

For healthcare reform to be successful, it is essential that Congress helps to ensure the success of the health IT components included in the ARRA that aim to provide for a solid IT infrastructure for healthcare. Specifically, it is essential that Congress helps to ensure that the Executive Branch meets the timelines, requirements, and needs of Congressional constituents for the health IT components included in the ARRA. With over \$30 billion appropriated for health IT, Congress should effectively leverage its oversight of the Executive Branch through such activities as studies concerning the appropriate distribution of funds, oversight hearings concerning the health IT components of ARRA, and through continual engagement with their constituencies.

In addition, Congress should ensure that new health IT efforts are not redundant; rather that they effectively leverage existing resources. Healthcare reform legislation to-date addresses the continued need for harmonized health IT standards, workforce training and education programs for health IT, national healthcare strategies that incorporate health IT, health outcomes and safety research initiatives that leverage health IT, and new federal leadership positions to coordinate the use and application of health information. The ARRA already addresses many of these activities. Congress should ensure that health IT included in healthcare reform appropriately align with the ARRA.

Attached, please find a complete listing of HIMSS' recommendations for healthcare reform. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the recommendations with you in further detail. We can be reached by phone at (312) 915-9225 or by email at slieber@himss.org and bchaiken@docsnetwork.com. Again, thank you for all that you do in working to transform healthcare through IT.

Sincerely,

H. Stephen Lieber, CAE
HIMSS President/CEO

Barry P. Chaiken, MD, MPH, FHIMSS
Chair, HIMSS Board of Directors
Chief Medical Officer, DocsNetwork, Ltd.