



March 28, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society ([HIMSS](https://www.himss.org)) and our members thank you for your continued leadership and bipartisan dedication to strengthening our nation's health ecosystem through investments in health information and technology and standards-based health information exchange. To ensure our healthcare system continues to advance information sharing and interoperability capabilities, **we urge you to fully fund the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) at the President's proposed FY24 budget request of \$103.6 million.** This increase of \$37 million above the FY 2023 enacted level of funding would provide ONC with the necessary resources they have long needed to serve as the key partner to public and private sector stakeholders to advance the health information and technology ecosystem. This role is essential to achieve nationwide, standards-based health information exchange.

HIMSS is a global advisor and thought leader whose mission is to reform the global health ecosystem through the power of information and technology. As a mission-driven non-profit, HIMSS offers a unique depth and breadth of expertise in health innovation, public policy, workforce development, research, and analytics to advise global leaders, stakeholders, and influencers on best practices in health information and technology driven by health equity. We have long believed that seamless, secure, ubiquitous data access, and interoperable health information exchange will ensure the right people have the right access to the right health information in a usable format at the right time.¹

The passage of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009, propelled our nation's healthcare system into the 21st Century, rapidly accelerating our ability to leverage information and technology to support healthcare delivery and improve patient outcomes. As a critical convener for health IT activities across federal agencies, states, and healthcare sector stakeholders, ONC supports a wide array of initiatives aimed at advancing national goals for better, safer, and more equitable healthcare through a nationwide interoperable health IT infrastructure.² Since its establishment in 2004 and codification in 2009, ONC has led by example on national and international discussions on standards development, certification of electronic health technology, interoperability that leads to secure information exchange, and advancements in patient engagement. The ONC model has been replicated in countries across the world. However, since 2004 ONC has largely operated at the same funding levels despite being entrusted with new

¹ <https://www.himss.org/sites/hde/files/media/file/2022/04/26/pubpolicyprinciples.pdf>

² <https://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/page/2022-03/ONC%20FY%202023%20CJ.pdf>

authorities and responsibilities through legislation (HITECH Act, 21st Century Cures Act, MACRA, and an increased public health focus).

Despite their limited discretionary funding, ONC has continued to provide invaluable support to federal, state and local agencies and stakeholders on the many pressing issues impacting our nation's healthcare system. We believe that fully funding ONC will allow them to continue their critical work to advance interoperability and information exchange, coordinate federal and state-level digital health transformation, support the modernization of the U.S. public health data infrastructure, empower patients and clinicians with the most advanced information and technology capabilities, and successfully fulfill the many requirements outlined in the lengthening number of laws enacted since 2004 (i.e. MIPPA, HITECH, MACRA, 21st Century Cures Act, etc.). Without the much-needed funding boost, we fear that ONC will be hard-pressed to successfully execute the many agency initiatives, and priorities of Congress and the Administration. These include overseeing product certification, providing technical assistance on information sharing, ensuring technology solutions incorporate baseline cybersecurity and privacy requirements, incorporating a health equity by design philosophy for federal health IT programs, continuing advancements in patient access to health information and meaningful engagement as part of the care continuum, and working with CDC to advance public health data modernization that are necessary to support the transformation of the healthcare system.

The FY24 budget request includes \$39 million for ONC's Policy Development and Coordination work, which would support efforts to accelerate the adoption and expansion of exchange through the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (TEFCA) and advance interoperability standards development, testing for real-world adoption readiness, and policy work. ONC is set to take on additional efforts to promote and accelerate the adoption of TEFCA by a wide range of healthcare entities to allow health data to be more readily available to patients and providers.

HIMSS believes that ONC needs to continue to play a leading role in creating a culture of learning around information sharing to ensure that health data is flowing across the entire ecosystem in support of the goals of the 21st Century Cures Act. ONC has done a superior job convening and supporting the stakeholder community on implementation of the information blocking regulations and advising regulated actors on how to proceed in broad-based data exchange. Going forward, ONC will be an even more critical enabler of our health system transformation, including serving as the technical advisor across HHS on implementing information sharing and ensuring that patients, providers, developers, networks, insurers, and other stakeholders truly benefit from the new rules. Moreover, implementing these regulations positions the health ecosystem to leverage robust data sharing that will accelerate necessary advances in public health, patient empowerment, health equity, population health, and medical research.

HIMSS fully supports ONC's mission to promote the adoption of health IT and use of health information to enhance the health and well-being of all US residents, and we urge you to commit to boosting FY24 funding for ONC and match the President's Budget request. If you have questions about this letter, please contact David Gray at david.gray@himss.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harold F. Wolf III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Harold F. Wolf III, FHIMSS
President & CEO