

June 26, 2002

The Honorable Bill Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
1136 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Johnson
Chairwoman
Committee on Ways and Means Health Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
1136 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Thomas and Johnson:

Members of the eHealth Initiative — a non-profit consortium with more than 90 leading organizations whose mission is to improve the quality, safety and cost-effectiveness of health care through information and emerging technologies — want to commend you for your legislation the “Medicare Modernization and Prescription Drug Act of 2002.” Particularly, we express our support for the bill’s establishment of an electronic prescription drug program, which advances patient safety improvements and cost-effective care through promotion of interactive, real-time electronic prescription transmittals.

Modernizing America’s outdated Medicare program and improving patient care and safety for seniors are a continuing challenge our nation must meet. Your bill’s electronic prescription drug program advances these goals by:

- Authorizing grant funds for electronic prescription drug and biologic project implementation by health care professionals; and
- Enabling the Secretary of Health and Human Services to bestow grants or contracts on qualifying schools of pharmacy for the purpose of assisting such schools in acquiring and installing computer-based systems to provide pharmaceutical education.

Letter to Representatives Thomas and Johnson

June 26, 2002

Page two

As you know, increasing the effective utilization of information technology and creating a more interconnected health care system are powerful ways to enhance health care quality and patient safety while lessening clinical and administrative burden on health care providers. Boosting the dissemination of electronic prescribing tools and improving basic care processes through greater use of information technology that is interwoven with provider workflow, are vital to a safe, cost-efficient and high-quality health care system. Your legislation is clearly focused on achieving these goals.

In closing, eHI applauds your efforts to bring a prescription drug program to America's seniors and modernize the Medicare program by enhancing both patient safety, connectivity and standardizing electronically transmitted health care information.

Sincerely,



Janet M. Marchibroda
Chief Executive Officer
eHealth Initiative

June 27, 2002

The Honorable Bill Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
1136 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Johnson
Chairwoman
Committee on Ways and Means Health Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
1136 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Thomas and Johnson:

Members of the eHealth Initiative — a non-profit consortium with more than 90 leading organizations whose mission is to improve the quality, safety and cost-effectiveness of health care through information and emerging technologies — want to commend you for your legislation the “Medicare Modernization and Prescription Drug Act of 2002.” Particularly, our members listed below want to indicate their support for the bill’s establishment of an electronic prescription drug program and attention to information technology standards, coding and payment, all of which advance patient safety improvements and cost-effective care through the promotion of innovative, interactive, real-time health care delivery.

Modernizing America’s outdated Medicare program and improving patient care and safety for seniors are continuing challenges our nation must meet. Your bill’s electronic prescription drug program and technology provisions advance these goals by:

- Providing for national electronic prescription drug standards developed by the CMS Administrator in consultation with a new advisory task force;
- Requiring advisory task force recommendations on the: (1) computerized prescribing software, hardware and common platform landscape across care settings; (2) evaluation of system capabilities and readiness for medication error reduction tools; and (3) computerized prescribing implementation issues as they relate to current state and federal prescribing laws.

Letter to Representatives Thomas and Johnson

June 27, 2002

Page two

- Establishing a new Council for Technology and Innovation and an Executive Coordinator for Technology and Innovation within CMS to coordinate the coverage, coding and payment processes for new technologies and procedures;
- Providing for recommendations on improving coordination and appropriately hastening the time between pre-market FDA approval for specific classes of medical devices and CMS for coding and coverage decisions;
- Authorizing grant funds for electronic prescription drug project implementation by health care professionals; and
- Enabling the Secretary of Health and Human Services to bestow grants or contracts on qualifying schools of pharmacy for the purpose of assisting such schools in acquiring and installing computer-based systems to provide pharmaceutical education.

As you know, increasing the proliferation of information technology and creating a more interconnected health care system are powerful ways to enhance health care quality and patient safety while lessening clinical and administrative burden on health care providers. Boosting the dissemination of electronic prescribing tools and improving basic care processes through the greater use of information technology that is interwoven with provider workflow, is vital to a safe, cost-efficient and high-quality health care system. Your legislation achieves these goals.

In closing, we applaud your efforts to bring a prescription drug program to America's seniors and modernize the Medicare program by enhancing patient safety and connectivity as well as standardizing electronically transmitted health care information and better coordinating coverage, coding and payment procedures for new technologies and procedures.

Sincerely,

The eHealth Initiative
CareScience
4Medica Inc.
InterMap Systems Inc.
IBM Corporation
RxHub
Siemens Health Services
SMA Informatics