

November 20, 2003

The Honorable William M. Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
2208 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0522

Dear Congressman Thomas:

The eHealth Initiative -- a non-profit consortium of more than 140 leading hospitals, practicing clinicians, healthcare information technology organizations, pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, health plans, employer purchasers, and others -- applauds both your leadership and the efforts of Medicare conferees to craft a bipartisan Medicare reform and prescription drug bill. We particularly applaud Congress' recognition of the important and growing role that information technology plays in improving the quality and safety of healthcare that senior citizens receive through the Medicare program.

There are valuable provisions in the conference agreement which:

- Address the need for increased federal investment in healthcare information and technology infrastructure;
- Encourage an expansion of electronic prescribing;
- Provide for chronic disease management services enabled by eHealth technologies; and
- Encourage a more standards-based interoperable health care system.

These provisions will allow providers and patients to take advantage of the proven ability of information technology to drive improvements in healthcare outcomes and to reduce both costs and medical errors.

We look forward to a continuing and fruitful dialogue with you about how to improve healthcare in America through the greater use of information technology and the achievement of a standards-based interoperable health care system.

Sincerely,



Janet M. Marchibroda
Chief Executive Officer