Senator Charles Grassley                                       July 14, 2014
United States Senate
Committee on Finance
Washington, DC  20510-6200

Dear Senator Grassley:

I am writing regarding your and Chairman Wyden’s letter of June 12, 2014 from the Senate Fi-
nance Committee calling for suggestions regarding healthcare transparency.  My organization
feels that one of the most basic and important items to be made transparent are hospital ac-
creditation surveys.  Currently there is a provision in the Social Security Act [ Section 1865 [42
U.S.C. 1395bb] (b) ] which prevents the Department of Health and Human Services from releas-
ing these results without the hospital’s permission.  This provision needs to be repealed and the
full survey results made available to the public.

There are at least three accrediting organizations.   By far the largest is The Joint Commission,
which does post some hospital information on their website, but only after remediation.   An
example of inadequacy of post remediation information was the recent news report in Modern
Healthcare (“Cleveland Clinic cases highlight flaws in safety oversight”, Jun.7, 2014) which de-
scribed problems in patient safety at the Cleveland Clinic resulting in the Clinic being placed on
termination track with CMS but at the same time had good quality of care ratings from The
Joint Commission.   One can only wonder what the survey found before remediation occurred.

Accreditation surveys in general have process measures which were developed with the input
of the healthcare industry and are verified onsite by inspectors.

I have enclosed two letters, one signed by over 50 patient advocates/advocate organizations
including Consumer Union, the Cautious Patient Foundation and the Citizen’s Advocacy Center;
the other letter is signed by over 20 business/labor purchasing alliances including The Leapfrog
Group.
Thus, these survey's contain some of the most valid and important information for the public, yet they are shielded from public view. Certainly, repeal of this provision should be one of the first steps in healthcare transparency and I feel an industry that is truly supportive of transparency should readily support its repeal.

Respectfully,

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Board Chairman  
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Enclosures:  