

Comments from Union and Business Organizations

Sergeants Benevolent Association of New York City – Ed Mullins, President

Statement on the President's Aug. 22, 2006, Executive Order Regarding Health Care System Transparency

Over the years, Americans have become extremely discriminating consumers; often taking advantage of the wealth of information that exists on the reliability, price and safety of products before making any major purchase. However, the same can not be said of the way we purchase health care. In most instances, it is because we don't know where to look or what information is available to help us find the best value in terms of health care service and providers.

The President and Secretary Leavitt recognize this important fact, and are to be commended for taking such an important step to enhance transparency in our nation's health care system. This Administration has made access to affordable health care one of its highest priorities, and this Executive Order builds on these efforts. Not only does it increase transparency in the health care system, but it encourages the adoption of interoperable health information technology standards and promotes quality and efficiency in the delivery of services.

At the end of the day, this is about empowering consumers – giving them the tools and information they need to maximize their health care dollars, and to make well-informed decisions regarding health care providers and services.

Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce

WMC Applauds Order Affecting Federal-Government Administered or -Sponsored Health Care Programs

Tuesday, August 22, President Bush [signed an executive order](#) requiring federal agencies to give healthcare consumers greater access to information about the cost and quality of health care services. The executive order requires four federal agencies – the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Office of Personnel Management – to collect information about the quality and price of health care and to then share that data with each other and with those who participate in their programs. According to the White House, the goal of the order is to (1) promote price transparency, (2) promote quality transparency, (3) promote adoption of information technology standards, and (4) promote healthcare quality improvement.

WMC lauds President Bush for taking this action to promote healthcare cost and quality transparency. WMC is a strong advocate for providing healthcare consumers with greater access with information in order to help them make better, value-based purchasing decisions. Greater data transparency is a key component of [Healthier Choices for Affordable Health Care](#), the comprehensive healthcare reform plan unveiled in 2004 by

WMC, the Wisconsin Hospital Association and the Wisconsin Association of Health Plans.

Illinois Chamber of Commerce

Statement from the Illinois Chamber of Commerce Regarding President Bush's Executive Order Promoting Greater Transparency in the Health Care System

The Illinois Chamber applauds President Bush for taking action to promote transparency in the health care system. The President's Executive Order represents a tremendous opportunity to improve the health system for consumers.

The Chamber has embraced the principles reflected in the Executive Order. Specifically, the Chamber supports implementing measurement, transparency and disclosure of provider and health plan performance using nationally accepted standards that assist consumers to be better consumers of health care services and hospitals and providers to improve their performance.

Illinoisans should be able to select hospitals, physicians, physician groups, treatments and health benefit plans based on public reporting of national measures for quality, consumer experience, equity and efficiency.

The Chamber looks forward to actively engaging our employer, provider and insurer members to help the Department of Health and Human Services shape and implement these changes at the federal level. In addition, Illinois state government should do more to help health care consumers by building on the success of PA 94-501, which, when implemented, will provide consumers with vital cost information from Illinois health care providers.

Puget Sound Health Alliance

Puget Sound Health Alliance Announces Support of Health Care Transparency

The Puget Sound Health Alliance today announced its support of President Bush and Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Mike Leavitt's plans to collaborate with regional stakeholders to give consumers transparent information on quality and efficiency in health care. Alliance Executive Director, Margaret Stanley and Chair, King County Executive Ron Sims applauded the President's initiative which could enhance efforts the Alliance is spearheading to produce regional quality comparison reports on health care.

A public comparison report gives patients and employers a powerful tool for choosing health care. It gives providers a powerful tool to improve the care we get, said Sims. We welcome federal government support in creating comparison reports. Federal health plan data will make the reports more robust and ultimately more useful for patients, employers and providers.

Puget Sound consumers we surveyed show overwhelming support for a reporting system that will help them identify and choose the best performing medical practices, said Stanley

An Executive Order signed by the President earlier this week supports the development of Health Information Technology to measure quality at the health plan level. This information, which the administration would make available to stakeholders across the country, could enhance the Alliance's efforts to produce regional comparison reports, a key strategy to reduce the cost of health care by improving the quality of care and efficiency with which it is delivered.

According to HHS, the executive order requires federal agencies that administer or support health insurance programs to share information about the quality of care delivered by doctors and hospitals. The Executive Order also directs agencies to support existing regional quality collaboratives where all stakeholders are actively engaged in improving quality in health care. In July, Secretary Leavitt met with Sims, Stanley and other members of the Puget Sound Health Alliance to discuss their shared interest in reducing waste and inefficiency in health care, particularly through greater use of information technology such as electronic medical records.

The support of the federal government and federal health care data would enhance the Alliance's efforts to produce regional comparison reports with statewide information drawn from millions of health-insurance claims, an initiative that would give employers and consumers powerful information for choosing doctors and hospitals. The Federal Government is the largest payer of health care in the United States, representing one-quarter of all Americans covered by health insurance. With the inclusion of federal health plan information data, Alliance comparison reports would tell a more complete picture of health care now, which would help expedite more robust improvement initiatives and strategies.

A proposal to fund access to the data source to produce the Alliance public comparison reports is currently before the King County Council and yesterday was passed by the Operating Budget Committee with a recommendation to the full council to approve the funding. The full council is expected to vote on the funding September 5.

Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Arizona Chamber Commends President Bush's Executive Order to Increase Health Care Transparency

President Bush signed an Executive Order on Tuesday, August 22 requiring federal agencies that administer or support health care programs to give consumers greater access to information about the cost and quality of health care services. The Executive Order requires federal agencies to collect information about the quality and price of health care and then to share that data with each other and with those who participate in their programs. The Executive Order further requires federal agencies to implement health information technology systems that meet recognized standards of interoperability when they acquire or upgrade systems to exchange information between agencies or with non-federal entities. According to the White House, the goal of the order is to promote price transparency, quality transparency, and the adoption of information technology standards, as well as to improve health care quality.

The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry applauds President Bush for taking this action to advance health care cost and quality transparency. Escalating health care costs have led employers to seek new ways to reduce expenditures in order to remain competitive in the global marketplace. Arizona businesses recognize that greater access to information will enhance accountability and efficiency in the health care marketplace, ultimately leading to cost savings and better employee health outcomes.

The free marketplace functions best when buyers and sellers have complete and accurate information upon which to base decisions. The Arizona Chamber supports efforts to provide health care consumers with great access to information so that they can make informed, value-based purchasing decisions. Consumers benefit from lower costs, better care, and more efficient transactions with health care providers and insurers. Increasing health care data transparency is an important step towards resolving our nation's and our state's health care challenges.

American Health Information Management Association

Letter from AHIMA to Secretary Leavitt in support of Health Care Transparency

AHIMA is closely following the work of the American Health Information Community under your leadership. In fact, several recent announcements from the Community and the President's Executive Order have generated strong interest and excitement among AHIMA's staff and our 50,000 members. We especially appreciate your announcement of a personal commitment to consistency and uniformity in the collection and reporting of quality data, and the establishment of a Community workgroup on quality measurement and reporting.

AHIMA shares your deep commitment to this issue. For over 75 years, AHIMA has worked to ensure the consistency and integrity of data collected and reported from healthcare records. Health information management professionals oversee the collection of data for a variety of secondary purposes, including quality measurement reporting. They play a critical role in ensuring data is accurate and that its interpretation and limitations are understood by those who must use it. I offer our expertise and support in these areas and would like to specifically recommend that an AHIMA professional be appointed to serve on the quality measurement and reporting workgroup.

HIM professionals are deeply involved in efforts to adopt electronic health records (EHRs) because among their many benefits, EHRs have the potential to reduce inconsistent medical documentation and ensure quality measures are uniform and available as a byproduct. But this only works if care is given to data standards. This is an area of high priority projects being undertaken by AHIMA.

AHIMA's data standards and data quality initiative include gathering, researching, and analyzing performance measures and data sets from various quality organizations to identify variances in their reporting requirements. As you know, healthcare organizations are required to report a variety of inconsistent quality measures and formats. By collecting an initial core set of requirements into a central location and establishing a common denominator, we are identifying gaps and variances in quality reporting. This

effort will highlight the inefficiencies and inconsistency in current reporting requirements from public and private payers. Our analysis is looking not only at some of the measures discussed by Dr. Carolyn Clancy and her team at the Community meeting on August 1, but also measures developed by NCQA, CMS, and other groups across the industry, and the ASTM standards relating to such data.

In addition, AHIMA and the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) are working with AHRQ on planning for a quality measurement conference in November 2006. This will focus on existing barriers to efficient and effective reporting and will result in an action agenda that will be of interest to AHIC. AHIMA is also working with a number of groups to pursue the means to incorporate consistent processes, data elements, and core data sets in the EHR to allow the accurate reporting of secondary information for quality measurement and activities such as research, public health, and policy making.

AHIMA shares your belief in the need for consistently defined measures and industry consensus regarding indicators of quality and which data (from the health record) should comprise each measurement. From there we should be able to build—via our work with HL-7, HITSP, and CCHIT—a means to ensure standard data collection in the EHR. AHIMA also believes that, by working in collaboration with other stake holders, data currently reported in the claims process could be improved to assist in the collection of more useable accurate secondary data.

Mr. Secretary, we are encouraged that you have put this issue on AHIC's agenda and we hope that through an appointment to the work group, we can directly contribute to this important project.

Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry

Letter from CACI President and CEO Chuck Berry to Secretary Mike Leavitt

On behalf of the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, the state chamber of commerce, I would like to express CACI's support for President Bush's recent executive order that requires four agencies of the Federal Government to provide health-care consumer with increased access to information about the quality and cost and quality health care services.

CACI applauds President Bush for taking this step to promote greater transparency of health-care cost and quality. CACI strongly supports providing health-care consumers with greater access with information in order to help them make better, value-based purchasing decisions.

A bedrock principle of CACI's policy on health-care policy is that consumers, who are being asked to take ever more responsibility for their health and their health-care, require greater transparency of health-care data in order to make better decisions. Making better decisions requires quality, timely information on health-care choices, quality and cost.

In the current marketplace, consumers who can obtain information - especially with access to the Internet can make informed decisions about the services and products they wish to purchase. Decisions on health care should be no different.

Achieving the President's specific goals (creating value-based competition in health care, using information technology standards, developing quality standards by the medical community, sharing aggregate data on the price of care and creating incentives to measure and promote overall quality in care) will provide valuable lessons for the nation's businesses their workers and state governments.

This year, for example, CACI supported two bills that passed the Colorado General Assembly and were signed into law by Governor Bill Owens to (a) require hospitals to provide "report cards" and to (b) report hospital infections. Both bills were supported by the hospitals.

Health Policy Corporation of Iowa

Letter from HPCI President Paul Pietzsch to Secretary Mike Leavitt

The Health Policy Corporation of Iowa (HPCI) fully supports Federal efforts to advance transparency in America's health care system. The recent Federal health care information directive firmly cements the Federal government's commitment to do so. It uses the purchasing power of the Medicare Program, the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs , Indian Health Service, and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program to drive the availability of quality and price information and may prove to be a watershed event in efforts to advance a value-based health care system.

We are pleased that the August 22nd Executive Order builds upon the work that has been done at the local and national levels. These include two public-private collaboratives – the Hospital Quality Alliance (HQA) and the AQA (formerly the Ambulatory Quality Alliance) which have been spearheading efforts to implement performance measures pertaining to hospitals and physicians respectively. We hope and expect that the new joint AQA-HQA Steering Committee will work closely with CMS and AHRQ to expand the scope, speed and adoption of performance measures for both hospitals and physicians.

HPCI recognizes that transparency of performance information is essential. Transparency has proven to be an important catalyst for improvement in health care. It is also essential for consumers and patients. Comparative quality and cost information will improve the consumer's ability to make informed decisions.

As a coalition of employers and other purchasers, HPCI develops joint initiatives, conducts research and education, and leverages solutions to improve the quality and affordability of health care in Iowa. We recognize the importance of leveraging and supporting national resources such as the Consumer/Purchaser Disclosure Project, the national Quality Forum, The Leapfrog Group and similar efforts. These groups like our, in turn, recognize the central role of the Federal government.

The Federal efforts to advance transparency are absolutely essential. It is also important that this be done in collaboration with a private sector. The AQA-HQA Steering Committee recently created five work groups. Working with the Federal government, these groups will begin building a “road map” to align and spur performance measurement efforts across hospital and ambulatory care settings.

All of these developments represent a big step forward toward our vision for a transparent health care system in which quality and efficiency is measured, reported and rewarded. It is a pivotal time for consumers and purchasers to be involved in shaping the agenda in partnership with the Federal government. We very much support your efforts and recognize that we must all step-up and join these efforts to achieve success.