



# Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup>

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

July 14, 2014

Dear Senator Grassley:

I am writing regarding your and Chairman Wyden's letter of June 12, 2014 from the Senate Finance 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 accreditation 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 releasing 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 This provision needs to be repealed and the full survey results made available to the public.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 described 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.

Respectively,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin T. Kavanagh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin T Kavanagh, MD, MS  
Board Chairman  
Health Watch USA, Inc  
606-875-3642

Enclosures:

Letter to Senator Tom Harkin, Sep. 2, 2011.

Letter to Senator Mitch McConnell, Oct. 27, 2011.