



January 7, 2009

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

On behalf of the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME), a membership organization of more than 1300 healthcare chief information officers across the nation, we are writing to offer our strong support for the nomination of Senator Tom Daschle to serve as Secretary of Health and Human Services. Senator Daschle brings exemplary leadership qualities to this position, having served both as Senate Majority and Minority Leader and having demonstrated the unique ability to work collaboratively, joining former Senate Leaders in 2007 to create the Bipartisan Policy Center dedicated to finding common ground on pressing public policy challenges, including healthcare.

Secretary-Designate Daschle has strong health policy credentials and extensive experience with previous Congressional efforts to revamp our nation's healthcare system. In 2008, he published *Critical: What We Can Do About the Health-Care Crisis*, which cites low adoption rates (15 to 20 percent of clinicians) of computerized patient records that "compromise the quality of care, lead to medical errors and cost us as much as \$78 billion a year." The President-Elect's selection of Senator Daschle speaks to President-Elect Obama's goal of health reform that calls for the adoption of electronic health record systems and other technologies by hospitals and physician practices to improve the quality and efficiency of healthcare delivery.

As the Committee votes on the confirmation of Senator Daschle for Secretary of Health and Human Services, we call your attention to CHIME's recommendations recently submitted to the Presidential Transition Team. These recommendations expand on President-Elect Obama's emphasis on adoption of health information technology and its important role in health reform. Technology as a high priority is already evident, given its inclusion in the economic stimulus package now under Congressional consideration.

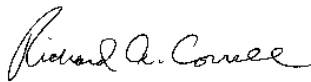
CHIME, founded in 1992, advocates for the effective use of information technology in transforming our healthcare delivery system. To that end, we offer the following guidance:

1. **Federal Leadership.** Establish in law with necessary funding a senior level position within the Administration to oversee a national health IT strategy to coordinate and oversee implementation of health IT initiatives across all agencies and departments of the federal government in coordination with similar efforts in the private sector.

College of Healthcare Information Management Executives
3300 Washtenaw Avenue, Suite 225
Ann Arbor MI 48104
www.cio-chime.org

2. **Standards Policy.** Authorize funds for a public-private sector body or set of bodies to advise, coordinate, and facilitate health IT-related initiatives within and between the federal government and the private sector related to priority-setting, standards policy and standards harmonization. Build upon significant progress achieved through standards-related bodies, such as the Health Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP).
3. **Incentives.** Authorize and appropriate the necessary funds to incentivize adoption of electronic health records (EHR) by hospitals and physician practices that receive federal funding, including Medicare, Medicaid, VA and DOD. Ensure that EHRs comply with accepted standards and certification criteria established by recognized standards-related and certification bodies, such as the Health Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP) and the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT).
4. **National Infrastructure for Health IT.** Support the development of a nation-wide interoperable health IT infrastructure to include the identification and adoption of standards and policies, uniform and consistent use of the selected standards, and policies and practices across national, state and local initiatives. While various bodies over time have addressed some of the transaction standards associated with health IT, joint government and industry collaboration are essential to ensure both interoperability and uniformity.
5. **Health IT Workforce.** Provide grant awards to institutions of higher learning to educate and train the next generation of healthcare workers in healthcare information technology practices, including clinical decision support, health informatics and EHR implementation to improve the delivery and quality of care. For the incumbent health workforce, create grant awards for career training and development in the use of clinical decision support, EMR implementation and other HIT tools.
6. **Underserved Populations.** Address the health and healthcare needs of underserved populations through health IT, including improved access to telehealth networks by expanding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Rural Health Pilot Program to underserved urban as well as rural communities.
7. **Privacy and Security.** Support national action to achieve privacy standards as a means to address significant variation in legislation governing privacy between and among State and Federal jurisdictions. Toward this objective, create standards by which data can be shared and adopt one set of clearly defined privacy standards.

We applaud the choice of Senator Daschle to lead the Obama Administration's health reform effort and pledge to work with you toward transforming today's paper-based system into an electronic, interconnected healthcare system to deliver "high-quality high-value healthcare" to the American people. Should you have questions on these recommendations, please contact CHIME's Director of Advocacy Programs, Sharon Canner, scanner@cio-chime.org, (703)562-8834.



Richard A. Correll
President and CEO
College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME)
rcorrell@cio-chime.org

College of Healthcare Information Management Executives
3300 Washtenaw Avenue, Suite 225
Ann Arbor MI 48104
www.cio-chime.org