



September 18, 2008

Honorable Fortney H. "Pete" Stark
Chairman
House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee
1102 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) and the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) are writing to urge you to include the provisions of HR 1467, the "10,000 Trained by 2010 Act," in HR 6898, the "Health-e Information Technology Act" to be considered by the committee. Specifically, we request that the text of HR 1467 be inserted into Title III, Sec. 311, Subtitle B as "Sec. 3013. Grants to develop a health information workforce".

Introduced by Rep. David Wu (D-OR), HR 1467 passed the House by voice vote on June 6, 2007 and addresses an imperative issue facing our changing healthcare system: the development of an adequate and qualified health information specialist workforce. A workforce trained in health information management and health informatics will help improve the quality, efficiency and coordination of our nation's healthcare system.

As the transition to an electronic health record continues to gain momentum, healthcare delivery needs to dramatically reinvent the way it collects, processes, and uses health information. For a successful transition, the healthcare industry requires a workforce capable of innovating, implementing and managing health communications and information technology, confidentiality, and security.

HR 1467 addresses this issue through the establishment of grants that focus on research, education and training of future health information specialists. Without a workforce capable of innovating, implementing, and using technology, many HIT system implementations will fail or could even cause harm. Further, without a plan to train clinicians and existing health information specialists at all levels of healthcare delivery, the goal of an improved, interconnected healthcare system may never be met. This failure to implement health information technology may ultimately be blamed on the technology, but in reality the true failure will rest on the insufficient expertise necessary for implementation and maintenance.

The healthcare industry is already behind on meeting the education needs necessary to have a trained workforce. Your immediate action on this legislation will significantly help us to close the gap in our need for educated and trained professionals and the goals set for the effective use of health information technology.

Mr. Chairman, the members of our two associations are truly on the front lines of implementing electronic health records and health information technology. AHIMA is the premier association of over 52,000 health information management (HIM) professionals whose members are dedicated to the effective management of the personal health information needed to deliver quality healthcare to the public. Founded 80 years ago to improve the quality of medical records, AHIMA is committed to advancing the health information management profession in an increasingly electronic and global environment through leadership in advocacy, education, certification, and lifelong learning. For additional information, you can visit www.ahima.org.

With over 4,000 informaticians, who are at the same time physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and members of other professions, AMIA is the premier organization in the United States dedicated to the development and application of medical informatics in the support of patient care, teaching, research and healthcare administration. AMIA links developers and users of health information technology, creating an environment that fosters advances that revolutionize healthcare. To learn more, you can visit www.amia.org.

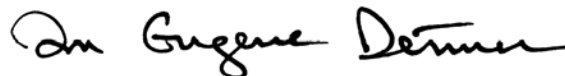
Thank you for your untiring efforts on the important health information technology issue. We believe HR 1467, the "10,000 Trained by 2010 Act," is an important step in addressing the critical health information technology workforce and education issues. We look forward to continuing our work with you on HIT and other important issues. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us or you may contact Don Asmonga, AHIMA's director of government relations, at don.asmonga@ahima.org or Doug Peddicord, AMIA's legislative representative at doug.peddicord@whaonline.org.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Honorable Dave Camp, Ranking Member of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee

