

July 30, 2010

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess
United States House of Representatives
229 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Burgess:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA), our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems, and other health care organizations, and our 40,000 individual members, I am writing to offer our strong support for the *Ensuring Equality for Early EHR Adoption Act of 2010*.

The AHA appreciates the actions of Congress in providing Medicare and Medicaid payment incentives to meaningful users of certified electronic health record (EHR) technology. The demands that this program will place on vendors, however, are significant.

Hospitals and physicians across the country will need to purchase and install EHRs within a short-time frame, potentially causing delays in vendors' ability to fill those orders. This situation will be exacerbated by an IT workforce shortage, which is estimated to be 50,000. And even the early adopters this program was designed to recognize – those hospitals already using EHRs – will need to upgrade or replace existing systems with certified products in order to be eligible for incentives. Moreover, the certification process is not yet up and running, so no certified products are available to any provider at this time.

Your bill would help to alleviate this situation by providing for the temporary treatment of certain EHR products as certified for purposes of EHR payment incentives. Hospitals would still need to demonstrate that they were meaningful users of these EHRs by meeting all of the regulatory requirements for meaningful use. And they would be expected to have their systems fully certified by 2013.

We look forward to working with you to see this important legislation become law.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President