



## American Academy of Family Physicians

March 1, 2007

The Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy  
407 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kennedy:

On behalf of the 94,000 members of the American Academy of Family Physicians, thank you for introducing *The Personalized Health Information Act*. We strongly support financial incentives that would allow providers to purchase electronic health record systems; collaborative management of medical problems and conditions by physicians and patients using online personal health record tools; standards for portability and interoperability; and privacy protections for patients. We believe that your legislation moves the US toward those goals.

While there is a growing consensus that health information technology will transform US health care, there is disagreement about how best to make this happen. The AAFP believes that the top priority should be to make it straightforward and inexpensive for primary care physicians to obtain electronic health records, for the simple reason that they see the most patients. Many family physicians work in practices of two to three members. These small practices already have limited capital and, coupled with the current levels of inadequate reimbursement for primary care, simply cannot afford to implement an electronic health record system. Nevertheless, AAFP views electronic health records as an important tool for physicians to coordinate patient care and provide for ongoing quality improvement at the practice level.

Consequently, we agree with bill's goal to empower patients to seek physicians who use health information technology. Given the economic realities of small practices, the bill's incentives will help physicians use these systems in their practices.

Additionally, we appreciate the new provisions regarding interoperability. Specifically, while the previous version required the Secretary of HHS to specify interoperability standards, the new bill makes clear that standards already exist in the market and that the health record must be capable of exchanging standards-based data with other users of health data.

Finally, the AAFP believes the right to privacy is personal and fundamental. Patients should have a right of access to, and correction of, medical records. Your legislation takes this right into account.

Thank you for your continuing interest in this important issue and we look forward to working together.

Sincerely,

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