



Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA, Executive Vice President, CEO

August 12, 2010

The Honorable Michael Burgess, MD  
U.S. House of Representatives  
229 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Burgess:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for H.R. 6005, the "Ensuring Equality for Early EHR Adoption Act of 2010." Your legislation will address the concerns of physicians who purchased electronic health records (EHR) early on and will not qualify for Medicare or Medicaid EHR incentives, unless their EHR gets certified by the 2011 start date of the program. H.R. 6005 does not require the use of certified EHRs in 2011 and 2012 as long as the EHR enables the physician to meet the meaningful use requirements of the incentive program. Greater flexibility in meeting meaningful use measures is also needed during the initial stages of the incentive program so that physicians can qualify for incentives.

The AMA strongly supports widespread adoption and meaningful use of EHRs. However, studies of EHR adoption clearly show that it takes more time for smaller and rural practices to adopt and implement EHRs because they have fewer resources. While the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) did make some improvements to the final Stage 1 Medicare and Medicaid EHR meaningful use criteria, meeting all of the measures will be challenging, especially for the smaller and rural physician practices. In addition, processes are needed for testing clinical quality measures and ensuring EHR product availability, affordability, and functionality for meeting all meaningful use measures as well as the clinical needs of a physician's practice. Physicians will need time to evaluate and choose the EHR technology that best meets the needs of their practice. A transparent evaluation process to determine EHR vendor readiness and how the program and EHR adoption and use rates are progressing should also be required.

The AMA greatly appreciates your leadership on supporting the need for more flexibility in the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive program requirements in order to maximize physician participation. We look forward to working with you to advance this bill and to addressing remaining concerns we have with the EHR meaningful use program and requirements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Maves". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA