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## **Legislation to Modernize QIO Program**

**Statement by Sallie Cook, MD**  
**President, The American Health Quality Association**

The American Health Quality Association (AHQA) strongly supports legislation introduced in the House of Representatives today by Congressman Michael Burgess, MD (R- TX) to modernize America's Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) program and reform Medicare physician payment.

This visionary legislation reflects a recent call by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to both strengthen the QIO program and integrate it into national strategies for health care performance measurement and improvement. In a March 2006 report, the IOM said that the QIO program represents an invaluable resource for improving health care quality in every state and territory. The IOM wrote in this report, "[I]f such a program did not exist, CMS would need to create one to fulfill its obligation to ensure that all beneficiaries receive high quality care." CMS – the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services – administers the QIO program.

The QIOs under contract with Medicare work directly with health care professionals to spread best practices, reduce medical errors, and solve quality-of-care problems. Their services include hands-on technical support, mentoring, and education to improve health care quality at the community level in every state.

Congressman Burgess' bill recognizes that modernizing the QIO program is crucial to improving health care quality across the country. We all know that the quality is not what it should be. It's not just a question of motivation: Physicians and other health care professionals across the country are

working hard every day to provide high quality care in an environment of increasing regulatory and payment pressures. But even the most motivated providers need hands-on help.

They not only need help, but are grateful for it. In a recent independent survey of stakeholders working with QIOs, 9 in 10 said they were satisfied with the assistance they received. One stakeholder, William F. Jessee, MD, President and CEO of the Medical Group Management Association, called the QIOs “outstanding resources and valued partners in a variety of joint efforts to help improve patient care.”

Studies also show that help from QIOs is effective. Evidence strongly suggests that QIOs are having a positive impact on the quality of care. We are pleased to release today a summary of recently published peer-reviewed studies demonstrating QIO effectiveness (see attached).

As the health care system increases the use of performance measurement and incentives, providers need greater access to the support that QIOs offer in every state. QIOs are on the front lines driving change to make real, lasting improvements.

Congressman Burgess has performed a tremendous service today for patients across the country. We urge Congress to promptly consider and adopt this legislation to help more patients benefit from safe, timely, effective, equitable, efficient and patient-centered care.

**The American Health Quality Association** is dedicated to improving the safety and effectiveness of health care. AHQA represents the national network of Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) that work with hospitals, medical practices, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, health plans, pharmacists, and employers to encourage the spread of best clinical practices and improve systems of care delivery. Visit: [www.ahqa.org](http://www.ahqa.org).