

The Honorable Olympia Snowe
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Snowe and Stabenow,

It is my pleasure to lend the support of the American Health Quality Association (AHQA) and our members to your recently introduced legislation, the Health Information Technology Act of 2005 (S. 1227).

S. 1227 is an important step forward in our shared mission to improve the quality and safety of health care. The use of health information technology (HIT) by providers at the point of care in all settings can be a transformational tool helping to generate major gains in quality, safety and efficiency.

Your legislation recognizes and addresses some of the chief barriers to HIT adoption – particularly the up front cost of HIT, as well as the current lack of standards in the HIT industry. AHQA applauds the standards-setting provisions, grants and additional reimbursements for HIT set forth under your bill.

At the same time, it is critically important to ensure that the HIT purchased by providers using the grant funding under your legislation is implemented with the necessary care process and workflow redesign to actually transform the system for improved quality, and not just automate current systems of care.

To this end, AHQA believes that your bill should also give these providers the opportunity to receive assistance from the national network of Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs). As you know, QIOs are independent, community-based health care organizations that contract with the Medicare program to measurably improve quality. QIOs are working across the country to support the adoption and effective use of HIT for better care, and AHQA believes that directly linking providers who receive grant funding under your bill to assistance provided by the QIOs would be a positive way to help ensure that federal dollars spent on HIT ultimately achieve the quality and efficiency goals that underlie your legislation.

AHQA applauds your leadership on this important issue, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



David G. Schulke
Executive Vice President