



Statement for the Record

Submitted by

The Premier healthcare alliance

House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health

“Legislative Hearing on 21st Century Cures”

April 30, 2015

The Premier healthcare alliance appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement for the record of the House Energy and Commerce hearing, titled “*Legislative Hearing on 21st Century Cures.*” We applaud the leadership of Chairman Joe Pitts and Ranking Member Gene Green for holding this important hearing.

Premier, Inc. is a leading healthcare improvement company, uniting an alliance of approximately 3,400 U.S. hospitals and 110,000 other providers to transform healthcare. With integrated data and analytics, collaboratives, supply chain solutions, advisory and other services, Premier enables better care and outcomes at a lower cost. Premier, a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recipient, plays a critical role in the rapidly evolving healthcare industry, collaborating with members to co-develop long-term innovations that reinvent and improve the way care is delivered to patients nationwide.

HIT interoperability foundational to enabling 21st Century Cures

Cost-effective, interoperable health information technology (HIT) infrastructure is foundational to advancing and expediting health research. Being able to fully leverage robust data is critical to the discovery and development of new cures, modernizing clinical trials, effective surveillance of patient safety, and improving quality and efficiency of care. Despite its potential, the current HIT ecosystem

continues to be challenging for healthcare providers and researchers alike due to the lack of interoperability.

As this committee heard in previous hearings, the current market incentives are not aligned with open exchange of necessary healthcare data in cost-effective ways. As a result, data is locked in proprietary software systems across the care and research spectrum. The interoperability challenges created by these locked systems hinder their ability to connect and exchange information with other HIT assets including EMR/EHR systems, medical devices, sensors, monitors and other information technology tools necessary for improving research, patient care, safety and efficiency. The current lack of interoperability has enormous consequences not only for research, care and safety of patients but also in terms of cost to our healthcare system. Today, to build the bridges that connect disparate data sets necessary to provide comprehensive and informed decisions or care, researchers and/or providers are forced to either pay their original system vendors thousands of dollars to custom code links so they can “talk” to other HIT assets, or do it themselves via faxing or emailing. This comes at an enormous expense, both in raw dollars and manpower.

The goal should be to design and implement an HIT ecosystem that that enables secure exchange of health information in timely and cost-effective ways. It should promote collaboration among all stakeholders, creating a learning health system that focuses on improving healthcare quality, efficiency, safety, affordability and access through government and market incentives, while encouraging innovation and competition. To accomplish this goal, the federal government should incorporate the following policy principles and metrics in its implementation requirements to achieve interoperability of HIT system infrastructure:

- **Development of standards that promote interoperability and innovation:** The Office of National Coordinator, in collaboration with stakeholders and other federal agencies, should promote and facilitate the development and use of standards in key areas including: patient identifiers, terminologies, clinical data query language, security, open application program interfaces (APIs), and clinical decision support algorithms among others.

- **Transparent and public interoperability measures:** Transparent and public measures of interoperability should be developed in collaboration with standard setting bodies in consultation with the private sector and promoted through the ONC's certified technology program. These measures should be validated and tested in terms of standards, processes and within specific use case scenarios. Measures should include business and implementation approaches that deliver functional interoperability outcomes and include operational processes and implementation practices.
- **Standards and measures compliance:** Federal government should promote the enhancement of ONC's enforcement tools and certification program to ensure standards and measures compliance.

As this committee continue its work on the 21st Century Cures legislation, we urge the Members to require HIT interoperability as foundational to facilitate discovery, research, storage and use of health data in advancement of cures and patient care, and to enable further progress toward increased patient safety and higher quality care while bending the cost curve.