

May 1, 2008

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
Committee on Ways & Means
United States House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim McCrery
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways & Means
US House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John D. Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
US House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Rangel, Dingell & Baucus and Ranking Members McCrery, Barton & Grassley:

We urge you to actively support passage of the Medicare Electronic Medication and Safety Protection Act of 2007 (E-MEDS, S.2408 & H.R.4296) this year to reduce deadly and costly prescription medication errors. We, the undersigned, represent more than 210 million Americans through consumer and labor groups, employers, public purchasers, physician groups, pharmacy benefit managers, insurers, and other prescription drug stakeholders. On behalf of these and all who might benefit, we urge you to support this critical legislation.

The Institute of Medicine (IoM) has reported that medication errors kill more than 7,000 Americans annually and has estimated that as many as 1.5 million harmful medication errors could be prevented each year if electronic prescribing was implemented on a national scale. To address this crisis, the IoM called on physicians to replace deadly and inefficient paper prescriptions with electronic prescriptions by 2010. Regrettably, at the present time, fewer than one-in-ten physicians currently use this life-saving technology.

Embracing the IoM's call to action, the bipartisan E-MEDS Act was recently introduced by Senators John Kerry, John Ensign, Debbie Stabenow, and Representatives Allyson Schwartz, Jon Porter, and Lois Capps. The legislation is intended to save lives and reduce harm caused by adverse drug events (ADEs) by requiring physicians who participate in Medicare to use electronic prescribing. U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt has also called on Congress to enact legislation linking electronic prescriptions to Medicare reimbursements this year. Increasingly, policymakers recognize the urgent need for Congressional action this year for the safety of the American public.

In addition to the beneficial safety aspects of electronic prescribing, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has estimated that there would be increased administrative efficiencies for physician offices and pharmacies, as well as significant cost savings for patients and payers through access to lower-cost brand and generic medications. And most recently, a survey conducted by the Southeast Michigan ePrescribing Initiative (SEMI) found that 9 of 10 physicians and their staff who had implemented e-prescribing said it met or exceeded their expectations. Over 70 percent of physicians reported being very satisfied with the system, and almost 70 percent strongly agreed that e-prescribing improves the quality of patient care.

In summary, numerous studies have found the benefits of e-prescribing include:

- saving lives through a reduction in ADEs;
- reducing hospitalizations, sickness and suffering associated with ADEs;
- reducing administrative time and labor costs for pharmacies and physician offices; and
- saving money for beneficiaries and payers.

We strongly encourage you to work toward enactment this year of legislation that will require physicians to use e-prescribing in Medicare. Americans deserve access to the best care available.

Sincerely,

Consumer/Labor Groups

- AARP
- AFL-CIO
- Consumers Union
- National Consumers League
- National Partnership for Women & Families
- SEIU

Business/Public Purchasers

- AT&T
- Caterpillar Inc.
- Cisco Systems
- Corporate Health Care Coalition

- Dell
- The Dow Chemical Company
- EDS
- The ERISA Industry Committee
- Ford Motor Company
- General Motors Corporation
- HR Policy Association
- Information Technology Industry Council
- National Business Group on Health
- National Retail Federation
- NCR Corporation
- Oracle
- Public Sector HealthCare Roundtable
- Southeastern Michigan ePrescribing Initiative (SEMI)
- Texas Instruments
- UPS
- Verizon Communications
- Xerox Corporation

Prescription Drug Stakeholders

- Pharmaceutical Care Management Association
- Aetna
- Barr Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
- BlueCross BlueShield Association
- CIGNA
- CVS Caremark
- Coalition for a Competitive Pharmaceutical Market
- Express Scripts, Inc.
- Generic Pharmaceutical Association
- Medco Health Solutions, Inc.
- Mylan Inc.
- National Association of Chain Drug Stores
- Teva Pharmaceuticals
- United Health Group
- WellPoint

Medical Professionals

- American Medical Group Association