



June 4, 2015

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

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Dear Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, I am writing to express our support for H.R. 6, the 21st Century Cures Act, approved by the House Energy & Commerce Committee (the Committee) on May 21, 2015. The Academy applauds the Committee for its leadership in drafting and passing the bill. In particular, we appreciate the provisions that would allow clinical data registries better access to health information to be used for improving patient outcomes, and those that would improve the interoperability of health information technology.

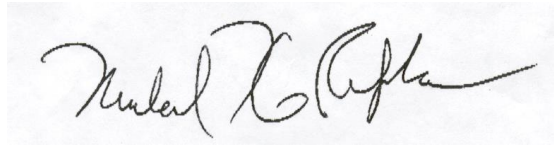
The Academy launched IRISTM (Intelligent Research in Sight) Registry, ophthalmology's clinical data registry, with the goal of giving these specialists the tools to lead efforts to improve the quality of eye care to patients. While enthusiastically embraced by the profession, ophthalmologists in certain sectors have faced challenges in participating in ophthalmology's "big data" effort due to their electronic health record vendors' business practices. Close to 40 percent, or 6,500 ophthalmologists participate in IRIS Registry through EHR integration. IRIS Registry is integrated with over 26 different ophthalmic EHR systems, and combined with other specialty registries, our registry platform vendor has integrated with over 60 different EHR systems. Clearly there is no technology or standards related barrier preventing this integration. However, some EHR vendors choose to engage in information blocking activities, preventing physicians from sharing their data with a registry. Such practices interfere with interoperability and quality improvement efforts, and we support the language in this bill that would prohibit them.

In addition, the bill would require the Secretary to develop interoperability standards for health information technology that would improve [clinical data registries'] ability to securely exchange health information with providers "without special effort." These provisions would help reduce the number of practical and functional barriers that currently make it difficult for clinical data registries to access health information for the purpose of tracking clinical outcomes and improving quality of care. Eliminating these practices will help clinical data registries access

patient health information and therefore increase registries' ability to analyze this information to improve quality of care.

Again, thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving the quality of care for patients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Repka", written on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Mike Repka, MD, MBA
Medical Director for Governmental Affairs