



July 6, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chair
House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Joe Pitts
Chair
House Subcommittee
Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee
House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee

Re: HR 6, 21st Century Cures Act

Dear Chairman Upton, Ranking Member Pallone, Subcommittee Chairman Pitts, Subcommittee Ranking Member Green and Rep. DeGette:

On behalf of the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA), representing 17,000 members from around the globe who are involved in all aspects of the science, practice and advancement of gastroenterology, we thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 6, the 21st Century Cures Act, legislation aimed to modernize and accelerate the process of developing and delivering new treatments and technologies for patients. The AGA shares your goal of improving the discovery, development and delivery of innovation in our health care system and are pleased to offer our support of H.R. 6.

AGA supports ensuring that patients have access to new drugs, devices, diagnostics and therapies that can improve their quality of life. Through the AGA Center for GI Innovation and Technology, we support innovation and the development of new technology in gastroenterology, hepatology, nutrition and obesity by guiding innovators, companies, private equity and venture capital through the technology development and adoption process. It is the goal of AGA and the Center to help assess the value of new technologies on patient care, and support the approval, coverage and adoption of technologies that demonstrate promise and merit. We believe that H.R. 6 will foster an environment that will invest in research and innovation and streamline the approval process to ensure that patients have access to timely lifesaving treatments.

The AGA particularly appreciates the inclusion of the authorization of NIH for \$8.75 billion over five year. Such increases for NIH are critical in our ability to attract and retain the nation's best and brightest researchers and to build upon the progress made in the biomedical research field that leads to better treatments and ultimately cures for diseases. This investment also helps to improve our nation's economic competitiveness and create jobs. We also appreciate your recognition and support for young investigators who are critical in our ability to discover breakthroughs since they are more apt to take the necessary risks.

The AGA also appreciates your recognition of the need for interoperability of electronic health records and the secure transfer of data among healthcare providers that will allow for more efficient and effective delivery of healthcare services. We also thank you for your recognition of the need for semantic interoperability and including that in the standards since many of our physicians are concerned that current interoperability is not including the standardized method and guidelines for filtering the mass of information. Many physicians who are already overburdened are fearful that the flow and transfer of mass patient data will be overwhelming for them and they will have to sift through mounds of information that may not be meaningful to them when they are seeing that particular patient. They believe the inclusion of this concept will force vendors to not only transmit content but "meaning" as well.

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In regard to the language on the contract trigger for standards development, we would hope that the Secretary would take public input into account when determining whether there is a need for such standards. We also appreciate the inclusion of transparency language for EHR systems and believe this will be helpful to physician practices when choosing the most appropriate system to meet their clinical needs. We are appreciative of the interoperability language and your intention to protect physicians and providers who are reliant on vendors in purchasing valid and certified systems.

Again, we thank you for your ongoing leadership in ensuring patient access to new therapies and technologies and your support for the research and innovation community. We look forward to continuing to work with you to secure passage of H.R. 6.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. I. Allen".

John I. Allen, MD, MBA