



For Immediate Release
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Contact: press@healthitnow.org
202-572-6205

**Health IT Coalition Members Urge Congress to
Support Health IT Legislation for Patient Benefits**

*Care providers and patients explain how Health IT reduces medical errors, improves
prescription accuracy and increases care for underserved communities*

WASHINGTON – Citing numerous benefits to patients and their families, Members of the Health IT Now! Coalition called on Congress to pass health information technology (Health IT) legislation this year.

“Information technology will be essential to the success of any quality improvement or access initiative in health care,” said Nancy Johnson, spokesperson for the Health IT Now! Coalition. “It has the potential to improve the accuracy of prescriptions, improve care for underserved communities, enable better chronic care coordination for seniors, and much more. Congress must pass legislation this year to bring this vital tool to patient care.”

In a briefing for Members of the House and Senate and their staff, former Congresswoman Nancy Johnson was joined by representatives from coalition member-groups the American Diabetes Association, the Genetic Alliance, Consumers for Competitive Choice, and the Whitman-Walker Clinic.

“As we've implemented Health IT in our Washington-area clinics, we have seen first hand that Health IT enables enhanced privacy and security that the current paper-based system can never match. Today, medical records are often kept as paper files behind a receptionist's desk. Relying on the honor system is not good enough—not at all. Health IT fixes that immediately,” said Dr. Joseph Baker of the Whitman-Walker Clinic.

Legislation is required to establish a process to set nationwide interoperable standards for systems that support electronic records for patients and health care professionals. These interoperable standards are critical so that precious resources spent on deploying the technology can be leveraged to communicate seamlessly with other equipment and other systems. Technology can provide a secure system for sharing information that could prevent as many as 98,000 deaths each year and eliminate medical errors. Health IT would also create more convenient communication, and faster, more secure access to medical histories, test results and other critical information.

“I believe that the adoption of health information technology will help to promote better outcomes through the coordination of care for patients with diabetes,” said American Diabetes Association representative Cherrel Christian, a registered nurse and a member of the ADA Diabetes Epidemic Action Council. “As a nurse, I have seen this first hand by working with the Diabetes and Pregnancy Research Study.”

“By providing doctors and patients with secure access to health information during the consultation, e-prescribing and more efficient administration, Health IT is a victory for all patients,” said the Honorable Nancy Johnson, co-chair of the Health IT Now! Coalition. “The House and Senate should pass a bill this year. This is a bipartisan issue that should be solved now.”

The Health IT Now! Coalition urges Congress to pass legislation that will:

- Establish in statute federal responsibility to lead a public-private process to create standards for system interoperability, product certification, and quality measures and an accelerated process for standards improvement;
- Offer financial incentives to encourage the adoption of Health IT, and offer states, communities and other entities incentives to plan Health IT components and develop Health Information Exchanges;
- Provide federal focus on consumer empowerment through patient education about electronic health; and
- Establish federal leadership to resolve critical policy issues such as privacy and security as this life-saving system is being deployed.

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