



February 5, 2009

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Association of
American Medical Colleges
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Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write to support your amendment (SA 201) to the health care privacy section of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (H.R. 1). The AAMC is a not-for-profit association representing all 130 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems and 68 Veterans Affairs medical centers; and 94 academic and professional societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC represents 109,000 faculty members, 67,000 medical students, and 104,000 resident physicians.

Secure health information technology (HIT) has the potential to greatly improve health care quality, prevent medical errors, and increase administrative efficiencies. Your amendment is one important step in realizing this goal by ensuring that ongoing efforts to improve the quality and safety of health care delivered at our member institutions will continue unimpeded. As a result of your amendment, essential activities such as surveillance, case management, and care coordination can continue uninterrupted.

The AAMC believes that the current definition and function of health care operations – crafted to “allow activities that are essential to quality health care to occur unimpeded”¹ – maintains an appropriate balance between providers’ needs for appropriate use of protected health information and patients’ needs for privacy. Your amendment recognizes one important component of health care operations, and we wholly support its inclusion in the final legislation. Thank you for your leadership in this area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell G. Kirch".

Darrel G. Kirch, M.D.

¹ 67 FR 53,209 (2002)