



April 25, 2017

William W. Stead, M.D.  
Associate Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs  
Chief Strategy Officer  
Vanderbilt University Medical Center  
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Dear Dr. Stead:

I am writing concerning the critical topic of patient identification and the challenge it poses to healthcare providers and patients across the country. The College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME), an organization representing chief information officers (CIOs), respectfully requests the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) host a hearing devoted to facilitating an industry discussion of the status of patient identification and matching systems. CHIME believes accurate patient identification is so critical that it has embarked on a journey to identify a solution to this urgent need.

CHIME recognizes that accurate patient identification can greatly reduce the risk of preventable errors, significantly increase quality of care, and reduce unnecessary costs, which is why we are sponsoring a global competition aimed at incentivizing innovators to accelerate the creation and adoption of a solution for ensuring 100 percent accuracy in identifying patients in the U.S. Through [the CHIME Healthcare Innovation Trust's National Patient ID Challenge](#), we will be awarding a \$1 million dollar prize in 2017 for the winning solution that can: easily and quickly identify patients; protect patient privacy; achieve adoption by the vast majority of patients, providers, insurers, and other stakeholders; and scale to handle all patients in the U.S.

As you are aware, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) has been precluded from using their funds "to promulgate or adopt" a standard for the assignment of a unique patient identifier, according to language contained in the Labor-HHS Appropriations bill which has been included since 1999. There is however, language in the FY 2017 Appropriations House Labor-HHS report, while not yet adopted by both chambers, is indicative of a growing willingness to support private sector-led solutions. Specifically, the language states:

*The Committee is aware that one of the most significant challenges inhibiting the safe and secure electronic exchange of health information is the lack of a consistent patient data matching strategy. With the passage of the HITECH Act, a clear mandate was placed on the Nation's healthcare community to adopt electronic health records and health exchange capability. Although the Committee continues to carry a prohibition against HHS using funds to promulgate or adopt any final standard providing for the assignment of a unique health identifier for an individual until such activity is authorized, the Committee notes that this limitation does not prohibit HHS from examining the issues around patient matching. Accordingly, the Committee encourages the Secretary, acting through the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and CMS, to provide technical*

**College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME)**

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*assistance to private-sector led initiatives to develop a coordinated national strategy that will promote patient safety by accurately identifying patients to their health information.*

Furthermore, we would also note that Section 4007 of the Twenty First Century Cures Act contains language that instructs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study on patient matching. In fact, a [letter](#) was recently signed by more than 25 organizations, including CHIME, calling for a collaboration between HHS and the private sector on patient matching and identification efforts.

We are hopeful that NCVHS will consider holding a hearing to elicit feedback from the public on the challenges with present-day matching solutions, as well as, the opportunities for working more closely with the private sector. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our perspective on patient identification and matching and hope that NCVHS will consider our request for a hearing devoted to this critical topic. My staff Mari Savickis, CHIME's vice president of federal affairs, [msavickis@chimecentral.org](mailto:msavickis@chimecentral.org), is happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Russell Branzell, FCHIME, CHCIO  
CEO & President, CHIME

**About CHIME**

The College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME) is an executive organization dedicated to serving chief information officers and other senior healthcare IT leaders. With more than 2,400 CIO members and over 150 healthcare IT vendors and professional services firms, CHIME provides a highly interactive, trusted environment enabling senior professional and industry leaders to collaborate; exchange best practices; address professional development needs; and advocate the effective use of information management to improve the health and healthcare in the communities they serve. For more information, please visit [www.chimecentral.org](http://www.chimecentral.org).