



November 4, 2004

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Medical Group Association, I urge you to restore \$50 million in the Labor/DHHS appropriations bill (H.R. 5006) that would provide funding for the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) to accelerate healthcare IT projects and initiatives. The ONCHIT, under the leadership of Dr. David Brailer, has received wide-ranging and bipartisan support within healthcare and the government. Eliminating the funding would detract from the efforts he has commenced, cripple the emerging private sector initiatives and send signals of ambivalence to the field at a time when clarity and leadership are needed.

AMGA is an association that represents medical groups, including some of the nation's largest, most prestigious integrated health care delivery systems with a total of approximately 60,000 physicians. AMGA's mission is to shape the health care environment by advancing high quality, cost-effective, patient-centered, and physician-directed health care. The members of AMGA deliver health care to more than 50 million patients in 40 states, including 15 million capitated lives. The average AMGA member group has 272 physicians and 13 satellite locations.

This funding is necessary to achieve the goals outlined in *The Decade of Health Information Technology: Delivering Consumer-centric and Information-Rich Health Care*, unveiled by Dr. Brailer and Secretary Thompson this past July and enthusiastically endorsed by consumer and leading healthcare organizations. The report outlines a framework leading to a safer, higher-quality, and more efficient healthcare delivery system.

These funds support critical items identified in the report, achievement of which are essential to ensuring that the healthcare field will embrace information technology and that the nation will benefit from the improvements of an IT-supported healthcare system.

These benefits include improving healthcare for thousands of patients, while making the healthcare system more efficient. As you know, in 1999, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) reported that as many as 98,000 deaths occur each year a result of preventable medical errors. Healthcare IT is an important tool in improving the quality of healthcare. The work being done by ONCHIT and the goals outlined in the Secretary's report provide a unique opportunity to make meaningful progress and will begin to transform this nation's healthcare system. Providing these funds for ONCHIT will help achieve these important goals.

In the weeks ahead, as you and colleagues finalize appropriations for federal spending for the next fiscal year, your efforts to restore the \$50 million for ONCHIT would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald W. Fisher", is written over a white background.

Donald W. Fisher, Ph.D.
President and CEO