



January 23, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander:

Thank you for your commitment to preparing our country for public health threats. The Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) welcomes the opportunity to share its thoughts with you on this important topic.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation's healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century healthcare system that makes affordable, high-quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC – hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, pharmacies, post-acute care providers, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare through a patient-centered approach.

The recent disasters in California, Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico have raised awareness of the impact of these types of events on public health. Not only have patients in these areas had trouble accessing care, but the disasters have also affected the manufacturing and delivery of vital medical products. As a result, healthcare facilities around the country are facing shortages of important supplies.

The healthcare industry represents one-fifth of the U.S. economy. The industry plays an important role in responding to disasters, and should receive priority, first responder status for emergency response.

HLC also believes that it is critical that the federal government use the examples of recent disasters to prepare for future events. These after-action reports should include information on how to protect healthcare facilities from disaster, ensure that manufacturers are able to restart production as soon as possible, and transport products to and from the disaster zone and other areas of the country. Actions

undertaken by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), for example, would be helpful to include in the reports. These could include: 1) The temporary, safe importation of supplies; 2) The encouragement of expansion of production at other facilities; and 3) The expedited review of new products.

The after-action reports should also include information on preserving the continuity of care for patients. This includes electronic medical record interoperability so that patient records can be accessed at the receiving healthcare institution, as well as translation services so that displaced patients are able to receive health services in their native language. HLC members have experience in these areas and would be pleased to assist Congress and federal government agencies in the development of the plans.

In addition to natural disasters, the United States must be prepared for cyberattacks. These threats to public health are a significant challenge for the healthcare system. As cited in recent publications, 88 percent of all ransomware attacks on U.S. companies in 2016 were tied to the healthcare industry, and healthcare organizations are 450 percent more likely to be affected by cryptowall ransomware than average. These attacks can interrupt patient care and divert necessary resources from that care. HLC strongly believes that the healthcare industry needs a single point of contact in the federal government for cybersecurity. This single point of contact should be available around the clock to all healthcare institutions. Additionally, these institutions need continued antitrust and liability protection under the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act (CISA), which will ensure the continued sharing of information on cyber threats.

Thank you again for your attention to the important issue of public health preparedness. HLC looks forward to continuing to work with you. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Withey at (202) 449-3435.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary R. Grealy". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Mary R. Grealy  
President