

Friends of HL7

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt,

As Congress works to transform health care toward a more coordinated, value-driven system, the undersigned members of Friends of HL7 are writing to express our strong support for a \$5 million FY 2021 appropriations request for the Office of National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to directly support Health Level 7 (HL7) FHIR® standards-related activities needed to successfully achieve interoperability and information sharing, which are necessary components of a safe, high-quality, cost-effective, patient-centered U.S. health care system.

HL7 FHIR® application programming interfaces (APIs) play a foundational role in the ONC final rule, [21st Century Cures Act: Interoperability, Information Blocking](#), just released by HHS on March 9, 2020, which will enable patients to have safe, secure access to their health information, achieving the laudable goals of the bipartisan 21st Century Cures Act, passed nearly unanimously by Congress more than three years ago.

Founded in 1987, HL7 is a not-for-profit, ANSI-accredited standards development organization (SDO) dedicated to providing a comprehensive framework and related standards for the exchange, integration, sharing, and retrieval of electronic health information to support clinical practice and the management, delivery, and evaluation of health services. This includes the development and support of standards such as HL7 FHIR®, which enable faster and more effective interoperability of systems across health care, a key priority of public and private sector leaders.

Both Congress and federal agencies have embraced HL7 FHIR® as a national standard as part of their strategy to support transparency, improve the quality of care, and provide seamless and secure access to, use, and exchange of electronic health information by patients, their health care providers, health plans, public health, researchers, and others. Several federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as well as the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense, rely on HL7 standards to support interoperability across health systems.

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Unlike most SDOs, HL7 made a commitment several years ago to make all of its standards—including HL7 FHIR®—publicly available at no charge. Given the transformative nature of HL7 FHIR® and the decision by several federal agencies to adopt it as a national standard for interoperability, HL7 needs predictable, ongoing support to effectively develop, test, maintain, improve, and efficiently support the widespread adoption of required standards. HL7 FHIR® standards are a public good and play an integral role in our nation's strategy to improve health and health care for all Americans.

We hope you will consider language as outlined in Attachment I. If you have any questions or would like further information, please don't hesitate to contact Friends of HL7 co-chairs, either Janet Marchibroda at jmarchibroda@friendsofhl7.org or 202.922.9077 or Tina Olson Grande at tgrande@hlc.org or 202-449-3433.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians

American College of Physicians

America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP)

American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA)

Anthem

Ascension

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

Change Healthcare

CVS Health

Duke University Health System

Healthcare Leadership Council

Intermountain Healthcare

Kaiser Permanente

Marshfield Clinic

Medical Group Management Association

National Health Council

NextGen

Office Practicum

Pharmaceutical Care Management Association

Premier Inc.

Surescripts

UCB

Attachment I
Suggested Language

Appropriations Subcommittee

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Committee

Federal Agency/Department and Budget Account

Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Secretary, General Department Management, Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology.

Requested Bill Language

Standards for Interoperability. The agreement includes increased funding of \$5 million to support HL7 FHIR® standards-related activities needed to successfully achieve interoperability and information sharing for better health and health care.