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HIMSS Electronic Health Record Association Applauds Federal Support of EHR
Implementation for Hospitals and Physician Practices

CHICAGO (August, 26, 2009) -- The HIMSS Electronic Health Record Association (EHR Association) responded with enthusiasm to the announcement on August 20 of the availability of grants totaling nearly \$1.2 billion to help hospitals and health care providers successfully install and use electronic health records (EHRs) as part of the continued implementation of the healthcare IT provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

Echoing Vice President Joe Biden, Justin Barnes of Greenway Medical Technologies and Association Chairman said, "We agree wholeheartedly that EHRs make healthcare safer and more efficient, as well as help keep patients healthier at lower costs." Barnes went on to say, "Our collaborative work as an association for the past five years has been to accelerate the adoption of EHRs in hospitals and physician practices of all sizes and specialties. It's exciting to see such a strong commitment at the highest levels of government to support this essential effort to improve our healthcare system."

One set of grants will make available \$598 million to establish approximately 70 Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers to assist hospitals and clinicians in evaluating, acquiring, implementing and achieving meaningful use of certified EHRs. Another grant program will provide \$564 million to states and qualified state-designated entities to develop structures to share healthcare information in an emerging network of health information exchanges (HIEs) in support of the nationwide health information network (NHIN).

"The EHR Association is a strong and early supporter of the HIT portions of the ARRA and concurs with Dr. David Blumenthal, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, that these new programs will help create a national, private and secure electronic health information system," said Mark Segal, PhD, of GE Healthcare and EHR Association Vice Chairman. The EHR Association is aligned with Dr. Blumenthal's premise that health information exchange with strong federal coordination and state innovation will enable information to follow patients within and across communities to help doctors and patients make the best decisions about medical care.

Segal continued, "Physicians and hospitals need help implementing EHRs and our member companies intend to partner with the new regional extension centers to ensure that such assistance, which is part of our normal approach to effective EHR implementation, is available where and when it is needed."



Justin Barnes added, "As an early advocate for standards-based health information exchange based on interoperability among EHRs and other supporting technologies, we urge state-funded HIE projects to rely on national HIE standards already in use in many of these projects. These standards are proving their value in the effective, secure exchange of patient information in communities across the US." Barnes expressed the Association's support of the HHS funding announcement's focus on such standards to support the NHIN as an overall coordinating structure. "Consistent use of these standards among HIEs and across states is essential for data to flow effectively and securely as envisioned by policy makers, industry stakeholders and consumers when the NHIN was initially conceived," Barnes concluded.

About the HIMSS EHR Association

The HIMSS EHR Association is a trade association of electronic health record (EHR) companies that join together to lead the health IT industry in the accelerated adoption of electronic health records in hospital and ambulatory care settings in the US. The Association provides a leadership forum for the EHR software provider community to speak with a unified voice relative to standards development, the EHR certification process, interoperability, performance and quality measures, and other EHR issues as they become subject to increasing government, insurance and provider-driven initiatives and requests. Membership is open to HIMSS Corporate Members companies that design, develop and market their own EHRs. The Association is a partner of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) and operates as an independent organizational unit within HIMSS. For more information, visit <http://www.himssEHRA.org>.