



AMERICAN BENEFITS COUNCIL

September 12, 2006

The Honorable Judd Gregg
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gregg:

The American Benefits Council welcomes your leadership in introducing the Medicare Quality Enhancement Act. Your legislation seeks to improve health care quality by allowing employers, health plans, consumers and many others greater access to Medicare data to better evaluate the performance of health care providers and the relative effectiveness of differing approaches to patient care. The American Benefits Council represents employers and other organizations which either sponsor or administer health and retirement benefits covering more than 100 million Americans.

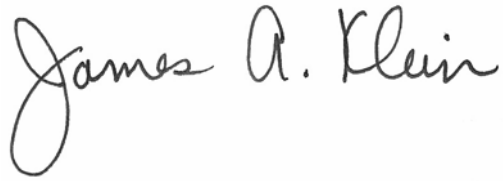
Your legislation would authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to select a limited number of Medicare Quality Reporting Organizations (MQROs) to obtain data on services which have been reimbursed under Medicare Parts A and B. Under strict standards for safeguarding the privacy of individually-identifiable patient information, the Quality Reporting Organizations would develop and release reports requested by the public for the purpose of improving health quality and efficiency. These reports would be a particularly important tool for comparing the performance of health care providers or alternative approaches to patient care and treatment.

We agree that greater access to Medicare data is needed to better evaluate quality and efficiency in our health care system. Even the largest employers -- including many of our members -- have only limited amounts of data on health care performance. As the single largest health care purchaser, Medicare data can contribute significantly to the development of a more accurate and complete picture on health care performance which purchasers and consumers can use to make better health care decisions.

We also recognize that your legislation would allow for much greater public scrutiny of individual health care providers and services using Medicare data. As such, there are likely to be suggestions for additional safeguards, longer timelines or limitations on the types of reports that may be released by the Quality Reporting Organizations. As your legislation moves forward, we are confident you will continue to work closely with employers, health plans, consumers, health providers and others to help ensure that the important goals of your bill are achieved as additional improvements are made. We certainly welcome the opportunity to work with you on this important initiative.

Again, we commend and thank you for your leadership on the Medicare Quality Enhancement Act and your efforts to improve health care quality and efficiency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James A. Klein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

James A. Klein
President