

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, please contact:

Mike Bittner

312-233-1087

Michael.Bittner@ahima.org



Patient ID Now Coalition Pleads Congress is Addressing Patient Misidentification

CHICAGO – July 31, 2020 – [Patient ID Now](#), a coalition of leading healthcare organizations, including the [American College of Surgeons](#), the [American Health Information Management Association](#) (AHIMA), the [College of Healthcare Information Management Executives](#) (CHIME), [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society](#) (HIMSS), [Intermountain Healthcare](#) and [Premier Healthcare Alliance](#), is pleased that the U.S. House of Representatives voted to remove the longstanding ban in its Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill that stifles innovation around patient identification.

The recently launched coalition is bringing attention to the critical challenges of patient misidentification that afflict the country's health system. Failure to accurately identify patients to their data raises patient safety and quality of care concerns, and those concerns have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. An archaic section of the federal budget has prevented the US Department of Health and Human Services from working with the private sector to develop a nationwide patient identification strategy, but today the House of Representatives, with leadership on this issue from Representative Bill Foster (D-IL) and Representative Mike Kelly (R-PA), took an important step forward in repealing this ban.

"We are very excited that the House of Representatives has taken this step towards addressing the harmful effects of patient misidentification," said AHIMA CEO Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE. "This bipartisan effort is a true demonstration of lawmakers working to protect patient safety, public health, and lessening the burden on the health system."

Properly matching patients and their data not only improves care but is vital in the response to the current pandemic. Accurate identification of patients is one of the most difficult operational issues during a public health emergency. Field hospitals and temporary testing sites intensify these challenges, and laboratories have reported difficulties returning COVID-19 results to the correct patients because of lack of comprehensive patient demographic data. Ensuring the correct patient medical history is accurately matched to the patient is critical for future patient

care, patients' long-term access to their complete health record, and for tracking the long-term effects of COVID-19.

“The coronavirus pandemic continues to demonstrate the importance of accurately identifying patients and matching them to their medical records. Today marks another milestone in keeping patients safe with the passage of the Foster-Kelly Amendment in the House, bringing us closer to a national patient identification solution,” said CHIME CEO Russ Branzell. “Representatives Foster and Kelly continue to be strong advocates for patients and CHIME is proud to continue working with them to eliminate preventable medical errors and deaths because of patient identification and matching mistakes.”

Here is what leaders of other coalition member organizations said about the recent vote:

- *“Accurately matching patients to their health information is critical to delivering safe, efficient and high-quality care during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Today, the House took an important step to removing a major impediment to patient matching and identification, which is putting patients at risk, increasing healthcare costs, perpetuating inefficiencies in care delivery and coordination, and undermining efforts to achieve nationwide interoperability.”* — Blair Childs, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, Premier healthcare alliance
- *“On behalf of our patients and caregivers, Intermountain Healthcare applauds House passage of the Foster-Kelly Amendment and looks forward to a future in which patients can accurately, safely, and consistently be matched to their health data across the care continuum.”* — Ryan Smith, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Intermountain Healthcare
- *“HIMSS applauds the House of Representatives for taking decisive action to eliminate the outdated and harmful appropriations ban on a unique patient identifier and permit HHS to actively engage in developing a national patient matching strategy. We encourage the Senate to include similar language in their appropriations bill, so the healthcare community can take action to advance patient safety through interoperable digital health information exchange.”*— Hal Wolf, President and CEO, HIMSS

###

About Patient ID Now

[Patient ID Now](#) is a coalition of healthcare organizations representing a wide range of healthcare stakeholders committed to advancing through legislation and regulations a nationwide strategy to address patient identification. Founding members include the [American College of Surgeons](#), the [American Health Information Management Association](#) (AHIMA), the [College of Healthcare Information Management Executives](#) (CHIME), [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society](#) (HIMSS), [Intermountain Healthcare](#) and [Premier Healthcare Alliance](#).