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Patient ID Now Coalition Applauds Action on Patient Misidentification

For third year, House of Representatives removes ban on work to develop a national patient identification strategy from appropriations bill

CHICAGO – July 15, 2021 – [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 has removed, for the third year in a row, the longstanding ban in its Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill that stifles innovation around patient identification.

Patient ID Now has brought attention to the need for a national strategy around patient identification that offers both improved patient safety and improved efficiency to healthcare, well as enhanced interoperability. Although patient misidentification has been a problem for decades, the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the harmful effects of the health system's inability to accurately match patients to their complete health records.

An archaic section of the federal budget has prevented the U.S. 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 from Representative Bill Foster (D-IL) and Representative Mike Kelly (R-PA), once again took an important step forward in repealing this ban.

The coalition is now calling on the U.S. Senate to finally join the bipartisan work of the House of Representatives and repeal the ban this year to work towards a health system that prioritizes the safety and privacy of patients.

“The pandemic made clear that now is the time to take action to ensure the health and safety of patients across the US and bolster the accuracy and interoperability of health data,” said AHIMA CEO Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE. “Moving the appropriations bill forward without this harmful ban is the first step toward finding a strategy that can lead to better safety and care outcomes.”

Throughout the pandemic the healthcare industry has struggled to resolve this difficult operational issue. 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, accurately tracking vaccination status, and monitoring the long-term effects of COVID-19.

"ACS applauds Congress in taking necessary and overdue first steps in working towards the trusted, digital identity of patients so that surgeons can exchange information on their behalf," said American College of Surgeons' Medical Director of Quality and Health Policy Frank Opelka, MD, FACS. "Our patients deserve trusted, shared information as they navigate a complex healthcare system."

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

- *"Today, because of a narrow interpretation of an outdated appropriations restriction, there is no consistent and accurate way of linking a patient to their electronic health information as they seek care across the health care continuum. This essential but missing functionality would add significantly to providers' ability to manage care safely, and if it were in place, it would assist in effectively battling the coronavirus. We applaud the House Appropriations Committee for lifting the restriction and urge the Senate Appropriations Committee to do the same," said Intermountain Healthcare President and Chief Executive Officer Marc Harrison, MD.*
- *"HIMSS applauds the House Appropriations Committee for taking critical steps to eliminate the outdated and harmful ban on a unique patient identifier," said HIMSS President & CEO Hal Wolf. "We must now focus on advancing a nationwide patient matching and identification strategy that supports patient safety through interoperable digital health information exchange and strengthens patient privacy rights. We urge the Senate to follow the House of Representatives and remove the ban."*

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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](#).