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For more information, please contact:

Mike Bittner

312-233-1087

Michael.Bittner@ahima.org



US Senate Removes Ban in Federal Budget that has Stifled Progress on a National Patient Identification Strategy for Two Decades

CHICAGO – October 19, 2021 – [Patient ID Now](#), a coalition of leading healthcare organizations, applauds the US Senate for removing the longstanding ban that stifles innovation around patient identification from its Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill.

By joining the bipartisan movement to remove barriers to accurate patient identification, the Senate has taken a firm step towards protecting patient safety, patient privacy, and supporting efforts to address patient identification issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Patient ID Now has highlighted challenges caused by patient misidentification in the healthcare sector's response to the pandemic. These challenges include thousands of duplicate records created during the vaccination registration process and disruptions in vaccine availability at provider sites because of inaccurate patient documentation.

"We thank the Senate for putting patient safety first and removing the ban from the Labor-HHS appropriations bill that hinders innovation on the critical issue of patient identification," said AHIMA CEO Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE. "This is an important step to help ensure patients are matched accurately to their medical records in the years to come."

With the US House of Representative's removal of the ban in its Labor-HHS appropriations bill earlier this summer, Patient ID Now is calling on the full Congress to pass this into law and officially remove the two-decades old ban on addressing a national strategy for patient identification and matching.

"Intermountain Healthcare applauds the Senate Appropriations Committee for lifting the outdated funding ban and recognizing the importance of accurately connecting patients to their health information," said Intermountain Healthcare Vice President and Chief Information Officer Ryan Smith. "We look forward to the near-term release of the congressionally-mandated patient identification report from the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and enactment into law of an HHS funding bill that removes the archaic prohibition and enables HHS to work with the private sector to finally achieve an effective national strategy on patient identification."

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

“HIMSS applauds the Senate Appropriations Committee for removing the harmful ban and taking action to address patient identification,” said HIMSS President & CEO Hal Wolf. “The challenges our healthcare system experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored the urgent need for our community to engage with HHS to develop and advance a national patient identification strategy. For too long, this outdated prohibition has impeded innovation and jeopardized patient safety. It is time for Congress to finally repeal the ban.”

“We are pleased to see that the Senate has joined the House in removing the outdated ban on developing a patient identification strategy,” said Frank Opelka, MD, FACS, Medical Director of Quality and Health Policy, American College of Surgeons. “For too long, inaccurate patient matching has led to adverse events, compromised safety and privacy, inappropriate and unnecessary care and unnecessary burden on both patients and physicians. We hope this is the first step towards enabling clinicians to track their patients across the many phases of their care journey and allow for optimal care.”

“CHIME applauds the Senate Appropriations Committee for removing this antiquated ban from their Labor-HHS bill, bringing us one step closer to a national patient identification solution,” said CHIME President and CEO Russell Branzell.

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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, Inc.](#) (HIMSS), [Intermountain Healthcare](#) and [Premier Healthcare Alliance](#).