

Date

The Honorable Insert

Insert "U.S. House of Representatives" or "U.S. Senate"

Insert address

Dear Senator or Representative INSERT:

As Congress continues its work to improve the U.S. health care system and continue its response to the coronavirus pandemic, I am writing to express my strong support for a FY 2021 appropriations request for the support Health Level 7 (HL7) FHIR® standards-related activities to be coordinated within the Office of National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) within the Department of Health and Human Services. These investments are needed to successfully achieve interoperability and information sharing, which are necessary components of a safe, high-quality, cost-effective, patient-centered U.S. health care system, as well as our national public health emergency response.

HL7 FHIR® application programming interfaces (APIs) play a foundational role in the ONC final rule, [21st Century Cures Act: Interoperability, Information Blocking, and ONC Health IT Certification Program](#), released by HHS on March 9, 2020. These APIs will enable patients to have safe, secure access to their health information, achieving the laudable goals of the bipartisan [21st Century Cures Act](#), passed nearly unanimously by Congress more than three years ago.

Founded in 1987, HL7 is a not-for-profit, ANSI-accredited standards development organization (SDO) dedicated to providing a comprehensive framework and related standards for the exchange, integration, sharing, and retrieval of electronic health information to support clinical practice and the management, delivery, and evaluation of health services. This includes the development and support of standards such as HL7 FHIR®, which enable faster and more effective interoperability of systems across health care, a key priority of public and private sector leaders.

*[If you wish, insert language that describes why you or your organization supports HL7 and/or HL7 FHIR®:]*

- *Describes why interoperability, information sharing, and HL7 or HL& FHIR are important to you, AND/OR*
- *An example of how HL7 FHIR, or HL7 has had an impact in improving health and health care either within your organization or more broadly AND/OR*
- *Any other insights you may have.]*

Both Congress and federal agencies have embraced HL7 FHIR® as a national standard as part of their strategy to support transparency, improve the quality of care, and provide seamless and secure access to, use, and exchange of electronic health information by patients, their health care providers, health plans, public health, researchers, and others. Several federal agencies, including those within HHS, as well as the Veterans Administration

and the Department of Defense, rely on HL7 standards to support interoperability across health systems.

Unlike most SDOs, HL7 made a commitment several years ago to make all of its standards—including HL7 FHIR®—publicly available at no charge. Given the transformative nature of HL7 FHIR® and the decision by several federal agencies to adopt it as a national standard for interoperability, HL7 needs predictable, ongoing support to effectively develop, test, maintain, improve, and efficiently support the widespread adoption of required standards. HL7 FHIR® standards are a public good and play an integral role in our nation’s strategy to improve health and health care for all Americans.

We hope you will consider supporting appropriations language to support HL7 FHIR activities in support of interoperability in FY 2021 appropriations. [*Optional: Suggested language is contained in Attachment I.*]

If you have any questions or would like further information, please don’t hesitate to contact me [*insert your email address and phone number*].

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Organization

**Attachment I**  
**Suggested Language**

**Appropriations Subcommittee**

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Committee

**Federal Agency/Department and Budget Account**

Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Secretary, General Department Management, Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology.

**Requested Bill Language**

*Standards for Interoperability.* The agreement includes increased funding of \$5 million to support HL7 FHIR® standards-related activities needed to successfully achieve interoperability and information sharing for better health and health care.