

February 15, 2008

Ms. Connie Hubbell, Chair
Kansas Health Policy Authority Board
900 SW Jackson Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Connie:

Last year at the annual Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA) retreat, I asked the board to form a task force to put together a plan to provide health care for all Kansans. You responded by forming the Health for All Kansans (HFAK) Steering Committee. Due to the successful work of the HFAK committee and the collaborative efforts of the private stakeholders; we now have a package of health reforms that will improve and coordinate health care, promote healthy lifestyles and personal responsibility; and expand insurance coverage to 75,000 more Kansans.

Today, I come to you once again to ask that we work together to address another important aspect of the health care system – health information technology and exchange. Starting with my service as insurance commissioner, I have resolved to position Kansas at the forefront of health care reform. I believe that information technology will be the next great innovation in the health care arena. Just as groundbreaking procedures and medicines revolutionized health care in past decades; today the rapid exchange of information will yield significant improvements in the accuracy, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of health care services.

When I issued an executive order last year creating the Kansas Health Information Exchange Commission, I asked the commission to build on the work of the Health Care Cost Containment Commission and the Health Information Security and Privacy Collaboration project to advance the use of technology to improve health care costs and quality in Kansas. The commission completed that task by issuing a report outlining a strategy to advance a statewide system of health information infrastructure.

The report has identified leadership and resource needs as the key issues to supporting and stimulating Health Information Exchange (HIE) on a state-wide level and has made recommendations to address those issues.

Just as we did last year with universal care and the Health for All Kansans committee; I believe that a cooperative effort among all stakeholders - public and private, legislative and executive - is the best way to move forward toward implementing these recommendations and developing a health information exchange. I also feel that the Kansas Health Policy Authority, as the lead health care agency for the state, is the appropriate agency to guide the development and administration of state wide health information technology and exchange.

Therefore, I would like to formally request the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board establish a Kansas Health Information Advisory Panel. This panel will provide guidance both on policy issues related to health information technology and on a resource center for stakeholders to be established by KHPA. Appointees to the panel will be made equally by the KHPA and the Governor's Office and they will represent the organizational categories outlined in the HIE commission report. The panel will report annually to both the executive director of KHPA and to the Governor's Office on issues related to health information technology including the development of a community health record for Medicaid and the State Employee Health Plan.

The creation of the Kansas Health Information Advisory Panel represents the next step in an on-going process that will serve to move Kansas closer to the development and implementation of a statewide HIE. As we move forward in this endeavor, I am committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to advance a statewide system of health information infrastructure; and I thank the KHPA for joining me in this effort.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Sebelius
Governor

cc: Joe Tilghman, Vice-Chair
Garen Cox
Dr. Ray Davis
E.J. Holland, Jr.
Rob Kaplan
Arneatha Martin
Dr. Vernon Mills
Susan Page