March 10, 2016

Chairman Lamar Alexander  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Patty Murray  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

On behalf of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES), we thank you for your continued support and recognition of the need to improve existing healthcare technologies, demonstrated by your recent sponsorship and passage of the *Improving Health Information Technology Act* (S.2511), in committee. HFES appreciates that the bill would take comprehensive approach to the challenge of health information technology (health IT) by addressing interoperability, patient access to electronic health information, and the use of health IT to improve patient care.

More specifically, HFES appreciates the inclusion of language in SEC. 3009A. requiring human factors experts to be involved in the development of reporting criteria for the Health IT Rating Program. The field of human factors and ergonomics (HF/E) works to develop safe, effective, and practical human use of technology, particularly by developing scientific approaches for understanding the ways in which humans interact with complex systems, known as “human-systems integration.” As human interaction with technology increases in the healthcare space, we encourage the Committee to use HFES as a resource and apply HF/E science and research while considering the use, effectiveness, interoperability, and security of health IT.

Effective implementation of health IT requires innovative ways to improve accessibility, usability, and interoperability for healthcare stakeholders, including doctors, hospitals, patients, caregivers, and others, which requires diverse technologies, privacy and security protections, and increased information sharing. HF/E is the science that ensures usability across populations and systems. For example, HF/E supports maximized usability for patients, providers, and caretakers when managing electronic health records and personal health records. HF/E seeks to ensure users are able to understand and employ healthcare information and the technology interface, accommodating users with different characteristics, such as demographic, access, education, and age, among others. Further, HF/E supports the usability of security technologies on individual and system-wide bases. From patient safety to building and monitoring secure systems, HF/E experts are experienced in designing, developing, and implementing usable and useful healthcare technologies, as well as training users and evaluating effectiveness.

As you may know, HFES is a multidisciplinary professional association with 4,500 individual members worldwide, including psychologists and other scientists, engineers, and designers, all with a common interest in creating safe and effective products, equipment, and systems that maximize and are adapted to human capabilities. HF/E works to develop safe, effective, and practical human use of technology, particularly in challenging settings. HF/E experts, research, and perspectives are vital additions to the national precision medicine dialog.

Thank you again for sponsoring and passing the *Improving Health Information Technology Act* through Committee. HFES strongly encourages you and the Committee to continue to incorporate HF/E and HF/E
experts in your approach to health IT and broader healthcare systems. We hope you will consider HFES as a resource in the future. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

William S. Marras, Ph.D., CPE
President
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

Mica R. Endsley, Ph.D.
Chair, Government Relations Committee
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

Cc:

Senator Michael B. Enzi
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Senator Richard Burr
Senator Bernie Sanders
Senator Johnny Isakson
Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr
Senator Rand Paul
Senator Al Franken
Senator Susan Collins
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Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.