

## Health Information Technology

### The Issue

There is compelling evidence that broad adoption of Health Information Technology (HIT) will lead to significant healthcare savings, reduced medical errors, and improved health delivery. Widespread use of available health information technologies effectively can transform the U.S. healthcare system. Some estimates indicate that health information technology could save our nation's health care system tens billions of dollars a year (one estimate is \$80 billion dollars a year), as well as help to prevent misdiagnosis or improper treatment, thereby saving lives and improving care. Just as important, widespread use and analysis of electronic health information can be easily shared, searched, measured and analyzed to help the medical community determine what treatments and drugs are most effective, and at what cost.

### Background

The federal government has accelerated efforts to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of health care by putting forth a number of initiatives at the national and regional levels to promote the adoption of HIT and regional health information organizations. In response to this, in 2006 the West Virginia Legislature enacted S.B. 170, which created the West Virginia Health Information Network under the West Virginia Health Care Authority. Other statewide initiatives are working on other e-health and health tech projects, such as the West Virginia Legislature's health care reform program, the West Virginia Health Improvement Institute and the West Virginia Telehealth Alliance.

Overall, these efforts are aiming to develop a community-based health information network in West Virginia to facilitate transmission and communication of patient clinical and health information designed to:

- (A) Promote more efficient and effective communication among multiple health care providers, including, but not limited to, hospitals, physicians, payers, employers, pharmacies, laboratories and other health care entities;
- (B) Create efficiencies in health care costs by eliminating redundancy in data capture and storage and reducing administrative, billing and data collection costs;
- (C) Reduce medical errors and create the ability to monitor community health status;
- (D) Aid patients/consumers in the maintenance and management of personal health information and record-keeping; and
- (E) Provide reliable information to health care consumers and purchasers regarding the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care, health plans and health care providers.

### The Chamber's Position

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce supports collaborative efforts to develop policies and programs that will position West Virginia as a leader in the use of health information technologies and to facilitate the following:

1. The adoption and implementation of electronic health records (EHRs), including
  - The implementation of e-prescribing that is integrated with the EHR.

- The adoption of systems providing clinical decision support, disease surveillance and reporting and health alerts related to homeland security.
  - The adoption of systems providing automatic drug-drug interaction and allergy alerts and preventive medicine alerts.
  - The adoption of web-based, public-utility model electronic medical record systems that will reduce the cost and complexity of adoption by physicians, particularly in rural practices and centers.
2. The collection and use of clinical data for overall quality improvement and health care management and cost-effectiveness.

The Chamber also encourages lawmakers to consider providing financial incentives to assist greater adoption of electronic medical record systems, particularly by rural primary care centers and physician practice groups.

Finally, the Chamber also calls on these initiatives to ensure that the development or selection of any system(s) comply with emerging national standards and that the confidentiality of patient specific protected health information be done in compliance with state confidentiality laws and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and any amendments and regulations under the act.