

December 10, 2013

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
717 Hart Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune
511 Dirksen Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baldwin and Senator Thune:

The undersigned companies and organizations, representing consumers, employers, insurers, analytics firms, physicians, hospitals, and research organizations are pleased to endorse S. 1758, the Quality Data, Quality Healthcare Act. This much-needed legislation would expand the scope and uses of Medicare claims data under the Qualified Entity (QE) program and establish strict procedures to ensure that the data remains secure and patient information is protected.

The explosion in health costs in recent decades owes in large part to the lack of sound performance measures for health care providers. Analyses based on Medicare data can yield insights with respect to practice patterns that, in turn, will allow consumers and health plans to make better-informed choices while providing timely feedback to providers.

Unfortunately, the existing QE statute is ill-suited to these purposes. QEs may only use Medicare claims data for the limited purpose of publishing aggregate, non-provider-specific analyses. S. 1758 addresses this deficiency by permitting non-public uses of this information by responsible commercial, nonprofit and governmental entities. Among the potential benefits are better health plan designs and improved comparison-shopping tools for consumers. Providers also will benefit as they strive to improve value and implement alternative payment models.

Importantly, S. 1758 addresses data security concerns by allowing QEs to share selected Medicare claims records with third parties under a data use agreement, enforced by civil penalties. Such sharing of data is indispensable if the QE program is to realize its potential. QEs themselves would not be able to conduct the many thousands of analyses that end users will need in order to draw actionable insights from these extensive data files.

While more remains to be done, particularly in the area of quality and safety transparency, the Quality Data, Quality Healthcare Act is an important first step toward creating a more accountable, consumer-centered health care marketplace.

Again, we are pleased to express our strong support for S. 1758, the Quality Data, Quality Healthcare Act. We look forward to working with you and your staffs in addressing the root causes of America's troubling health cost spiral.

Sincerely,

Council for Affordable Health Coverage
Compass Healthcare Advisors
HR Policy Association
National Retail Federation
Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality
Wisconsin Health Information Organization

National Coalition on Health Care
Corporate Health Care Coalition
Midwest Business Group on Health
ThedaCare Center for Healthcare Value
Wisconsin Medical Society