FEB 22 2011

The Honorable Paul Ryan
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Ryan:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding our efforts to continuously improve our Electronic Health Records (EHR) system, VistA, and encouraging us to work closely with commercial off the shelf (COTS) solution providers in the private sector.

As you may be aware, VA has a long and very successful history in developing and using EHR systems. We have been a leader in the creation and adoption of these systems nationwide. VistA itself has won many awards, including being recognized by the John F. Kennedy School for Government at Harvard University as a recipient of the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. VistA has long served as the standard for EHR systems in government and in the private sector.

As we look to continuously modernize VistA to keep it among the best EHRs in the nation, we have determined that our best path forward is to buy and integrate COTS products into VistA rather than continuing to create new functionality ourselves. We are, in fact, doing just that with products from Cerner Corporation, First DataBank, InterSystems, and several others.

To make it easier for proprietary product vendors to work with and sell to the VA, we are exploring using an "Open Source" model for all future VistA development. Under the Open Source model, we would encourage COTS product vendors, and others, to contribute changes to the VistA code that would make it easier for COTS packages to be integrated into VistA and marketed to VA hospitals. This will have the effect of opening up several billion dollars of our annual spending for much broader private sector competition. We hope to announce a final decision to proceed on this process before the end of February.

The Honorable Paul Ryan

Before moving forward with our Open Source strategy, we have had extensive discussions with both the providers and users of COTS EHR solutions, as well as welcoming input from industry, academia, and other interested parties. I appreciate your interest in this issue, and will continue to work toward providing the best possible EHR solution to our Nation's Veterans. A similar letter has been sent to Senators Herb Kohl and Ron Johnson, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, and Congressman Ron Kind.

Sincerely,

Roger W. Baker

FEB 2 2 2011

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Baldwin:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding our efforts to continuously improve our Electronic Health Records (EHR) system, VistA, and encouraging us to work closely with commercial off the shelf (COTS) solution providers in the private sector.

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The Honorable Herb Kohl
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding our efforts to continuously improve our Electronic Health Records (EHR) system, VistA, and encouraging us to work closely with commercial off the shelf (COTS) solution providers in the private sector.

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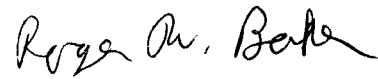
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The Honorable Herb Kohl

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FEB 22 2011

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United States Senate
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The Honorable Ron Johnson

Before moving forward with our Open Source strategy, we have had extensive discussions with both the providers and users of COTS EHR solutions, as well as welcoming input from industry, academia, and other interested parties. Based on this input, we are confident that we have broad support from the private sector for this approach.

I appreciate your interest in this issue, and will continue to work toward providing the best possible EHR solution to our Nation's Veterans. A similar letter has been sent to Senator Herb Kohl, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and Congressmen Paul Ryan and Ron Kind.

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U. S. House of Representatives
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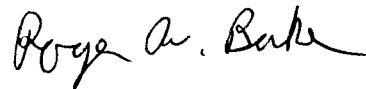
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