



December 11, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on HELP
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on HELP
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

On behalf of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC), I am writing to express our strong support for S. 2666, the “Electronic Prescribing for Controlled Substances Act” (EPCS 2.0 Act) and to urge the Committee to approve Senator Maggie Hassan’s Amendment #1 to S. 3393, the “SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act” on behalf of herself and Senator Markwayne Mullin during your markup.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation’s healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century healthcare system that makes affordable high-quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC – hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, post-acute care providers, homecare providers, group purchasing organizations, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare through a patient-centered approach. We are uniquely positioned to address innovation comprehensively from all perspectives in the healthcare industry.

EPCS 2.0 is needed to bolster the use of electronic prescribing (“e-prescribing”) when prescriptions are issued for a controlled substance. With the passage of the “Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act” (EPCS Act) in 2018 as part of the SUPPORT Act—and strengthened by similar state e-prescribing laws in over 30 states — e-prescribing practices are already helping to enhance the safety and security of prescribing processes while also saving taxpayers’ money. As you know, the EPCS Act required providers to employ e-prescribing for controlled substance prescriptions covered under the Medicare Part D program; that progress, coupled with the work in the states, has increased the percentage of electronic prescribing of controlled substances (EPCS) transactions from 38 percent in 2019 to 73 percent in 2021¹ without a statutory enforcement mechanism.

¹ Surescripts, 2021 “[National Progress Report.](#)”

S.2666 will help to reduce healthcare costs with minimal burden to providers. A 2018 study from Geisinger Health reported that when their hospital system implemented EPCS, it resulted in an average of \$850,000 in savings per month, thanks to reduced call center needs, increased physician workflow productivity and diversion control efforts. Their e-prescribing investment was recouped within two and a half weeks.² The cost to implement EPCS is about \$360 per year for smaller practices.³ Additionally, for the original EPCS Act enacted in 2018, the Congressional Budget Office determined that this policy applicable to prescriptions covered under the Medicare Part D program will save taxpayers \$250 million over 10 years.⁴

States and doctors are increasingly recognizing the importance of e-prescribing and implementing this important technology into their practices. With such significant progress having been made, we believe that now is the time for federal action to ensure all controlled substance prescriptions are issued electronically, not just those for Medicare Part D beneficiaries and for individuals in states with mandatory e-prescribing laws. Passing S.2666 would broaden the impact of existing beneficial e-prescribing processes that reduce opportunities for theft and diversion, as electronic controlled substance prescriptions cannot be altered or copied and are electronically trackable.

Passage of the EPCS 2.0 Act through Senator Hassan's S. 3393 Amendment #1 is needed to build on the original EPCS Act included in the 2018 SUPPORT Act to reduce fraud and opioid "doctor shopping."

Thank you for your efforts to improve access to evidence-based healthcare policies. HLC looks forward to working with you on our shared priorities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Witchey at (202) 449-3435 or dwitchey@hlc.org.

Sincerely,



Mary R. Greal
President

² Geisinger Health presentation, March 2018 meeting of the Healthcare and Information Management Systems Society, March 2018.

³ Dr. First, "[Cost-Effective Electronic Prescribing](#)."

⁴ Congressional Budget Office, "[Estimated Direct Spending and Revenue Effects of H.R. 6, Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment \(SUPPORT\) for Patients and Communities Act](#)," September 2018.