

May 8, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

Thank you for releasing an April 29 policy options paper on healthcare delivery system reform, which attempts to tackle an issue critical to systemic health reform. Retailers applaud your open, inclusive approach to crafting a bill and greatly appreciate the opportunity to respond to your proposed solutions. We expect to have substantial feedback for your next two papers on increasing access and health reform funding. At this point in time, we write to alert you to a quality, affordable opportunity in the existing delivery system that retailers provide to the general public through worksite and in-store retail clinics. We urge you to consider these clinics in a final bill considered by Congress.

The Retail Industry Leaders Association promotes consumer choice and economic freedom through public policy and industry operational excellence. Our members include the largest and fastest growing companies in the retail industry – retailers, product manufacturers, and service suppliers – which together account for more than \$1.5 trillion in annual sales. RILA members provide millions of jobs and operate more than 100,000 stores, manufacturing facilities and distribution centers domestically and abroad.

Academic studies repeatedly show that patients who get care sooner will require less expensive treatments in the long run. In-store and worksite clinics offer quality, inexpensive and convenient care for common illnesses and ailments by highly trained, state regulated nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Retail clinics decrease barriers that patients face in seeking out primary care by diminishing the long appointment wait and visit times that patients often experience at traditional physicians' offices. Retail clinics also offer a more convenient option for patients who need assistance treating routine chronic medical conditions (i.e., allergy shots), free up medical doctors to use their expertise treating more severe cases, and provide access to frontline care for rural residents without ready access to a hospital or a physician. Further, because retail clinics are typically located inside of or next to a pharmacy, patients can fill needed prescriptions easily and begin treatment for their diagnosis without delay.

Given the growing role that retail clinics are playing in delivering urgent care to millions of Americans, RILA applauds the Committee's proposal to consider expanded eligibility for the Electronic Health Record (EHR) Medicare incentive payments to include nurse practitioners and

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physician assistants under certain conditions, such as those who practice in settings outside of a physician office. Many retail clinics already embrace EHRs as a way to streamline costs and track individual patient health trends to provide better quality care. An EHR system which more fully integrates the care a patient receives at a clinic with the follow-up care he or she later receives at a physician's office will better serve the patient in the long run by eliminating the need for duplicative testing, reducing medical errors and providing greater patient convenience.

Finally, RILA member companies urge the Committee to consider ensuring that all types of Medicare, including Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage, and Medicaid are accepted at clinics for treatment of routine diseases and ailments. True coordination of care and changes in delivery begin with increasing access options for the patient. If a patient's insurance plan does not cover a range of options to seek out care for routine ailments and illnesses, the patient is less likely to get treatment, ultimately driving up systemic costs further when the patient's condition grows worse and requires more extensive—and expensive—medical treatment. Reimbursing a broader range of qualified medical service providers will enhance the patient experience and reduce overall costs.

Retailers are committed to providing millions of Americans with access to health insurance coverage, affordable prescription drugs, wellness programs and other options for increasing the overall wellbeing of our society. We look forward to working with you to provide any insight you may need to craft a responsible healthcare reform bill. Should you have additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to make me aware.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John G. Emling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "E".

John G. Emling  
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs