



The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

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The Honorable Tom Price, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
100 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Price:

On behalf of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), I am pleased to write in support of your legislation, H.R. 3940, the “Meaningful Use Hardship Relief Act of 2015.” STS remains fully committed to improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of care and we support the use of electronic health records (EHR). However, as you know, the Meaningful Use (MU) program has proven to be overly burdensome for physicians and it has not yet delivered on the promise of enhancing patient care.

This year, a delay in publishing final regulations for the MU program has left physicians with insufficient time to satisfy the 90-day reporting period called for by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Due to this delay, CMS has announced that it will broadly grant hardship exceptions for the 2015 reporting year. However, the MU statute requires that providers apply for and be granted exceptions only on a case-by-case basis, requiring individual applications, review, and approval. This not only places a significant burden on physicians but depletes CMS’ already strained resources to review each case and make numerous determinations within a reasonable timeframe.

Your legislation provides a practical solution to this problem by allowing CMS to process hardship exceptions in 2015 in a more efficient manner. STS commends you for offering this simple solution to ensure that MU participants are not unfairly penalized, and ensuring that physician time and effort goes to providing patient care rather than completing administrative tasks.

We appreciate your leadership in introducing H.R. 3940 and look forward to working with you to ensure its enactment. If you have any questions, please contact STS Director of Government Relations, Courtney Yohe (202/787-1222 or cyohe@sts.org).

Sincerely,

Mark S. Allen, MD
President