

January 25, 2018

Mr. Alex M. Azar, J.D.
Secretary
Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). On behalf of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and our 38,000 members, we look forward to working with you to continue improving patient care throughout the country and ensuring access to high-quality emergency medicine.

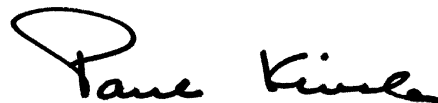
As the primary individual charged with overseeing the Medicare and Medicaid programs, emergency preparedness and response, public health and safety, medical research, and many other critical issues, your leadership will be vital to ensuring the health and well-being of millions of Americans. Your appointment comes at a time of significant change in the health care field, especially for the practice of medicine, so we are eager to work with you and your staff to address the challenges facing the health care system.

We strongly believe that any proposals to reform our health care system must include policies that provide both coverage *and* access to quality health care. As emergency physicians, we know better than most that coverage does not necessarily equal access, but the improvements we have made in lowering the uninsured rate should not be dismissed. No one in this country should ever be without necessary care because of an inability to afford it, and no one should be forced into bankruptcy or financial ruin because of necessary medical care. Further, we must continue to ensure that important consumer protections are upheld so that patients are not discouraged from seeking necessary emergency medical care.

We are hopeful that your background and experience in health I.T. will enable the Department to address the many challenges physicians of all specialties are facing with electronic health records (EHR) systems and the many requirements the Medicare program places on their use. The rigidity surrounding the requirements have led EHR developers to design their systems to them, rather than on how physicians actually practice medicine. As a result, physicians are forced to use time-consuming systems with poor usability. The additional burdens this places on them is especially problematic in the fast-paced environment of emergency departments; we therefore urge you to make improving the program a priority.

ACEP is a national emergency medicine specialty society with more than 38,000 members. ACEP is committed to improving the quality of emergency care through continuing education, research, and public education. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, ACEP has 53 chapters representing each state, as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, and a Government Services Chapter representing emergency physicians employed by military branches and other government agencies. Again, on behalf of ACEP and our 38,000 members, congratulations on your appointment. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Kivela, MD, MBA, FACEP
ACEP President

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