Creighton
Area Health Services

January 27, 2010

Dear Senator E. Benjamin Nelson:

As an invested citizen in the healthcare system in Northeast Nebraska, I am writing to express my support for Faith Regional Health Services' (FRHS) pursuit of federal appropriations for Fiscal Year 2010. Creighton Area Health Services is a Critical Access Hospital and we have transfer agreements with Faith Regional as well as FRHS physicians that come to our facility for outreach clinics in the specialties of cardiology and nephrology.

FRHS is in the middle of a $10m electronic health record implementation and it would like to extend the benefits of this system to its rural partners in Northeast Nebraska. FRHS has shown tremendous leadership in expanding access to and enhancing the quality of care in our region, and this most recent effort is an extension of previous investments by FRHS in education, technology and clinical outreach.

As you know, Nebraska's large geographic mass along with its highly decentralized population creates major challenges for healthcare providers, including lower economies of scale and higher costs, physician and nursing shortages, and considerable additional effort expended to increase access for the rural populations. Healthcare providers in Northeast Nebraska have moved forward boldly on their missions in spite of these challenges, but our rural providers are especially in need of assistance to increase access and enhance quality. FRHS is in an ideal position to extend its technological capabilities to the rural hospitals and clinics due to its centralized location and access to capital.

FRHS's efforts would provide our rural hospitals and clinics access to the most advanced medical imaging technology; they would also give our clinicians immediate access to medical history, test results, and tele-assessments. Currently, much of this is done with inferior technology at a much higher cost and over significant distances and lengths of time. When a patient is seen here at Creighton Area Health Services by a FRHS physician or we transfer a patient to FRHS, having an electronic health record that could be accessed at both facilities would improve the care our patients receive. Patients would not have to repeat their medical histories time and again and there would be less chance for error if providers could access one electronic record and just verify the information.

As you know, congressional funds are available to help offset the costs of such an undertaking. We in Northeast Nebraska are excited about the pursuit of these funds, and about what they could do for our healthcare system in Northeast Nebraska. We sincerely appreciate your support and are sure you will consider this a cause very worthy of federal funding. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your efforts on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Russ Diedrichsen
Board President
Creighton Area Health Services

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