



April 19, 2006

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary of Health and Human Services
United States of America
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to inform you that I have decided to resign my role as the nation's first National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. My resignation will be effective on May 19, 2006. It has been a privilege to lead the President's health information technology agenda for the past two years, and to work with you to make it a top priority for the federal government and the American health care industry. Together, we have developed a far-reaching strategy and set the foundation for the nation's digital health care revolution. I have now completed the tasks that brought me to Washington, and I am eager to return to other priorities and to my family in California. I am proud to leave behind a program that is respected across the political spectrum, fully operational and ready to meet the challenge set by the President.

I came into public service to lead the nation's health information technology agenda because I believe that our health care system has enormous potential. I have viewed my role as a leader and catalyst for change, and have focused on creating a marketplace where consumer-driven quality and efficiency can be commonplace in day-to-day health care. We have seen remarkable progress over the past two years, and have been able to realize several key achievements. These include focusing the public on health information technology and its potential to improve their health status, developing a strategy for health information technology adoption and health information exchange, formalizing the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and establishing its day-to-day management, pioneering solutions for achieving consensus on health information standards and technology certification, conceptualizing and designing the Nationwide Health Information Network, defining the privacy and security issues that will influence health information in the future, overseeing the health information industry response to Hurricane Katrina, chartering the American Health Information Community and identifying breakthroughs that will shape early successes, securing a robust FY06 appropriation that establishes baseline funding for health information technology into the future, and establishing health information exchanges and other grass roots efforts in more than 25 states that are rapidly innovating new methods for health care improvement. I have also had the privilege of working with you to launch the Administration's transparency initiative.

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
April 19, 2006
Page two

Despite these accomplishments, much remains to be done before medically beneficial health information tools are commonplace in the United States. Gaps in the adoption of health information technology between large delivery systems and small practices or safety net clinics must be closed if we are to prevent future inequities in access to care. Likewise, we must fully implement the technological, organizational and regulatory capacity for health information to be routinely exchanged in a seamless and secure manner under the scrutiny of consumers if we are to offer Americans portability, public health safety and tools to improve their own health status. Also, privacy and security policies that are suited for the digital era of health care must be established.

I know that these and other challenges pose difficult choices for the federal government and industry leaders, but addressing them is central to realizing the value that information technology brings to health care. Far-reaching changes in public policy and business practices will be required to gain the benefits of health information technology, particularly given our mutual desire not to impose mandates or new regulations on the health care industry. I know that you have the will to address these issues and are committed to taking the actions needed to ensure that health information technology becomes a foundational element of American health care. You will have my ongoing support, particularly since I will continue my efforts to advance low cost, high quality health care for all of our citizens.

I am enthusiastic about the work we have done, and am highly optimistic about the future of our health care system, despite its current challenges. I am confident that your continued leadership will ensure that the nation's health information technology agenda goes far beyond where it is today. I am humbled by the opportunity to serve the American people, and appreciate the lessons I have learned in public service. I thank you for your service and leadership, and look forward to working with you in the future.

Your friend and colleague,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Brailer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J. Brailer, MD, PhD