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STATEMENT OF AHIOS IN REACTION TO HEALTH IT LEGISLATION PRIVACY CONCERNS

BOSTON, Mass., February 23, 2009 — The Association of Health Information Outsourcing Services' (AHIOS) President, Bonnie Coffey, issued the following statement today in reaction to the many highly publicized concerns surrounding President Obama's Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act) and its impact on privacy and security.

“As President Obama and his administration lay out the details of the HITECH Act, which includes possible payment penalties for all physicians and hospitals that do not use EHRs (electronic health records) by 2014, many people are predictably jumping on the proverbial privacy bandwagon. Many feel that if Congress does not adequately address privacy as part of the healthcare IT funding measures, any efforts to advance the state of healthcare will be compromised.”

“However, privacy issues surrounding patient information have been intensely scrutinized and practically applied for years, and they should NOT be an obstacle to this important initiative that promises to improve efficiency while saving lives. While there's a plethora of privacy issues concerning the release of information (ROI) for patient medical records due to the complexity of the process, the capabilities exist today to handle the release of medical records securely and in compliance with government regulations. The critical factor is that these records must be handled by certified, trained professionals.”

“Few have spent more time and energy figuring out privacy issues than AHIOS — an organization that created the Certified Release of Information Specialist (CRIS) test to train and certify its members on the complexity of a health record and ROI process to stop unauthorized disclosure of protected health information. Technology alone can not protect us from security and privacy concerns. It takes specialized, ongoing training of key staff to stay abreast of ever-changing federal and state regulations to protect us from serious security breaches. ROI outsourcing companies like AHIOS’ member companies provide safeguards through its business practices and specialized training and are happy to work with the Obama administration and healthcare organizations to ensure that medical records are protected and not released without a patient’s consent under the new laws. Applying our vast knowledge of both federal, and oftentimes overlooked state and regional regulations, ROI specialists will also work with organizations to ensure electronic (patient) data used in transactions are safely and securely controlled in this new era of healthcare.”

About the Association of Health Information Outsourcing Services

Established in 1996, AHIOS promotes, strengthens and enhances the health information management outsourcing industry while ensuring excellence in the handling and dissemination of confidential patient-identifiable information. Its goals are to increase awareness of the value, importance and complexity of the industry’s services; establish standards of excellence for the industry of health information management outsourcing; pursue fair and equitable treatment of the industry through legislative, regulatory and legal processes; and create educational and networking opportunities for members.

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