

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kristin Juliar. I am director of the Montana Office of Rural Health. Each state has an Office of Rural Health, funded through the federal Office of Rural Health Policy. I am here today as the Vice-Chair the Steering Committee of the Montana Health Information Technology Task Force. The Steering Committee has asked me to provide information about the priorities that have been developed by the Task Force. The priorities are:

- Interoperable Electronic Health Records Adoption in rural and underserved areas should be supported so that small primary care clinics, rural hospitals, local health departments, community health centers, and other healthcare care providers can acquire health information technology to improve the quality and safety of care and to securely exchange health information
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation to assist small and medium physicians offices has been developed in a program called Doctor Office Quality – Information Technology (DOQ-IT). DOQ-IT could be implemented across Montana to:
 - Select and implement Electronic Health Record solutions that are cost effective, ensure privacy and meet accepted IT standards
 - Assist physician offices to implement Electronic Health Records with a focus on improved clinical outcomes and achieving quality indicators
- Personal Health Records allow patients to keep their own health records to share with physicians and providers to improve quality, reduce duplication of tests and allow access to faster, safer treatment and care in emergencies.
- Continuity of Care Records are a system of collecting a core data set of the most relevant and timely facts about a patient's health record. With the patient's permission, this information is used to assure a smooth transfer of information as people are referred to other physicians or seek emergency care.
- Health Information Exchange is the technological system that allows community and regional consortia of physician practices, hospitals and other healthcare providers to transfer patient information such as lab results, imaging, prescriptions and continuity of care records. HIE will improve continuity and quality of care and will reduce costs and patient discomfort through fewer duplicative tests.
- Infrastructure to Plan, Manage, and Implement the Recommendations will engage the physician, rural hospitals, public health, community health centers, long term care and federal healthcare providers in assuring a systematic and cost effective implementation of the priorities. Connecting to national standards and developments will ensure that Montana can interact with healthcare providers nationally, and gain access to the best and most appropriate technology for the state.

Thank you for allowing me to address the committee.

Kristin Juliar, Vice Chair, Montana Health Information Technology Steering Committee