



Written Testimony of
Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority
before the
Senate Communications and Technology Committee
regarding

An Update for the Committee on the Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority

February 13, 2012 - 9:30 a.m. - Hearing Room 8 E-A, East Wing

Where the Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority is now?

On July 5, 2012, Governor Corbett signed Act 121 of 2012, which formed the Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority (Authority). The Authority is responsible for fulfilling the duties in Act 121 and managing a \$17.1 million federal grant, plus state matching amount. The grant, from the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), is to establish health information exchange (HIE) in Pennsylvania.

HIE is the ability for authorized doctors, hospitals, medical labs, pharmacies and other medical providers to securely exchange health information electronically with one another. HIE has become one of the most important issues facing the healthcare community. Unlike many industries that use technology to exchange information easily between different institutions, many healthcare providers are still using paper records. Those healthcare providers are unable to exchange information beyond their organizational walls. In the 21st century, this is an inefficient way to do business and expect to achieve quality results.

Pennsylvania is on the cusp of turning this around for the healthcare industry and the people they care for, thanks to the hard work of many. Act 121 memorialized the work of hundreds of private and public stakeholders who helped gain consensus on how to move forward. The Commonwealth is seizing the opportunity through the formation of the Authority as an independent state agency to manage state and federal dollars to improve the health outcomes for patients and improve the cost and quality of healthcare.

The \$2.2 million request in the FY2013-14 budget is a critical investment to achieve the purpose of Act 121 and the stakeholder-driven strategic plans. The budget

request supports a market-driven approach to align investments in HIE and health information technology.

Following are benefits of fulfilling the \$2.2 million request:

- Fulfills the powers and duties required in Act 121 to create efficiencies and promote accuracy in the delivery of healthcare.
- Federal programs have issued specific requirements for medical providers to achieve “meaningful use.” This means that they are using health information technology in ways that are meaningful and beneficial. The investment drives the Commonwealth’s ability to find cost effective ways to meet the meaningful use requirements.
- Those health care professionals and institutions that meet the federal requirements, including the need to exchange information electronically, become eligible for incentive payments. The \$2.2 million supports their efforts to meet the federal meaningful use requirements.
- The budget request creates pathways to address needed efficiencies and increases the potential for HIE funding to support private sector HIEs and Commonwealth agencies as they work on connectivity and modernizing systems for HIE, such as:
 - Public health reporting and system readiness for meaningful use obligations, i.e., electronic lab reporting, syndromic surveillance, immunizations and cancer registries
 - Medicaid clinical quality management and patient care management to improve patient outcomes and reduce costs to the Medicaid program
 - Modernizing justice network infrastructure and enabling more effective information exchange platform for other government functions
 - Enables the Commonwealth to connect to the national HIE platform and support appropriate access to health care information
- The budget request supports the 3-to-1 match requirement of the grant. For every \$3 in federal money we receive, the state must invest \$1.
- It enables private sector businesses to implement their plans designed to take advantage of plans for exchanging health information across Pennsylvania.
- It promotes a positive view of government’s role in HIT/HIE advancement to improve health care for Pennsylvania’s citizens.
- It positions Pennsylvania as a leader in HIT/HIE and patient safety.
- The request provides a foundation for a modern privacy and security framework in HIE.

Authority’s accomplishments

The Authority, and its predecessor the Pennsylvania eHealth Collaborative, has been successfully working on HIE in Pennsylvania and has had some significant accomplishments:

- **Unanimous passage of Act 121 of 2012**

Support for HIE in Pennsylvania is strong at the legislative level. During the spring of 2012, both the Senate and the House of Representatives unanimously passed Senate Bill 8. Gov. Corbett signed the act on July 5, which formed the Authority under Act 121 of 2012.

- **Stakeholder support: More than 100 healthcare organizations support the Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority's strategic plan**

The Authority, and its predecessor the PA eHealth Collaborative, engaged stakeholders to formulate its strategic plan. They include doctors, nurses, patient advocacy groups, local and state government, academia and the legal community. Dozens of stakeholders continue to be engaged in workgroups that provide feedback and guidance on issues such as certification programs, financial sustainability, policies and operations.

- **Marketplace support**

Support extends into the business community. Pennsylvania already has 11 commercial health information exchanges (HIEs) that work with medical providers throughout the state. In a survey of the HIEs last year, the Authority found that all of them have, or plan to have, the ability for their participants to communicate with one another by the end of 2013.

- **Capacity-building**

Promotion of HIE connectivity is accomplished through grant programs that promote marketplace success. Two such programs took place last year and additional programs are envisioned:

- The Authority incentivized more than 4,500 providers to sign up with private sector businesses for a year of DIRECT messaging, a secure way for providers to email medical information to one another. This program exceeded federal goals. The providers work through four commercial businesses called health information service providers, all of whom were certified through the Authority.
- The Authority awarded \$6 million in grants to health information exchange organizations, which will quicken the rate of connections and support providers achieving meaningful use incentives.

Where the Authority is headed?

With Act 121 unanimously approved, Governor Corbett and both the House of Representatives and the Senate have appointed members to the Authority's board of directors. The first board meeting is scheduled for late April.

For the past two years, the Authority and its stakeholders have worked hard to establish a market-driven structure and plans for making HIE sustainable in Pennsylvania. With the board appointments in place, we are solidifying the plans and moving forward at a rapid pace. And thanks to the efforts of the stakeholders and staff, the Authority is well-positioned to make the plans a reality.

Our procurement process underscores this. After an exhaustive process that started last spring, the Authority will soon announce the vendor that will create the technology so medical providers in different health information exchanges can share electronic medical records with one another. We call this connection layer among health information exchange organizations the “Community Shared Services” layer.

The Community Shared Services is a clear illustration of the market-driven approach that our stakeholders want the Authority to take. Commercial businesses called health information exchanges (HIEs) and health information service providers (HISPs) are already contracting with Pennsylvania’s healthcare providers and connecting them with providers in their networks. After the Community Shared Services layer is created, those HIE and HISP businesses will connect to that, which will allow a local hospital or clinician to exchange information with another healthcare provider on the other side of town, city or the state. It will also enable providers to verify patient preference for information exchange and to provide overall better care for patients.

The Authority is working closely with state agencies to develop what is called a Commonwealth Internal HIE (CI-HIE). The vision is to create a system for state agencies that receive or send health data so they can exchange that information electronically through the Community Shared Services. The goal is that a provider connects once to get many connections and that includes exchanging data with state agencies.

In today’s society, when having the right information at the right time is critical. This is the vision for and purpose of the Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority, and we are excited about what implementing that vision means for healthcare, providers and patients.

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