# Microsoft Written Testimony on "Meaningful Use"

Microsoft appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony to the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) Executive Committee in its consideration of the appropriate criteria for the term "meaningful use" of health information technology. We share the view that the definition of "meaningful use" must be developed in the context of supporting health care improvements in quality, efficiency, and safety.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 ("ARRA") recognizes the importance of information technology in transforming the nation's healthcare system. The significant amount of funding to incentivize adoption and use, however, needs to be aligned with a new business model for health care that rewards prevention, chronic care management, and care coordination.

As the term "meaningful use" is integral in this new business model, we believe that the following requirements must be established as part of the definition of "meaningful use":

- Data exchange requirement should include granting consumers access to an electronic copy of their data in a consumer controlled personal health record;
- Open access to all data managed and maintained in a healthcare system using existing standards to transport data. We believe open access is a required action / policy before we get more prescriptive on certification; and
- Focus on improving health outcomes, not solely implementing information technology.

## "Meaningful Use" Metrics

**Consumer access.** "Meaningful use" should ensure that consumers have access to their health records as electronic data. This consumer access to clinical information must be central to "meaningful use." The installation of hardware and software and the exchange of information among clinicians alone, absent consumer access to a copy of their own data, will not engage consumers in their health and wellness. Engagement of individual consumer's is a crucial step in driving in facilitating continuity of care, controlling costs, improving health outcomes – all key pillars for any successful health care reform effort.

**Access to existing data.** The "meaningful use" definition should acknowledge the importance of meaningful use of core electronic health information exchange technologies for medication, imaging, laboratory and coordination of care, which already have well understood and widely used standard formats and exchange processes. Hospitals and clinicians must have access to all of the data that exists today (i.e. any system that operates in a meaningful use environment should be required to publish data exchange policies and processes that can be used by share healthcare data).

**Certification standards.** To ensure that the certification process for determining that EHR technologies enable "meaningful use," Microsoft supports the use of existing standards to insure data transport and re-use. Of course, the certification criteria must require that EHR technologies demonstrate they are enabling providers to meet ARRA and HIPAA privacy and security requirements. Certification that is overly prescriptive about features and functions has the potential to slow down software innovation.

**Health outcomes.** The "meaningful use" definition should be centered on whether and how information is used by healthcare providers to enable efficient healthcare delivery that results in improved health outcomes. The focus on how information is used directly aligns with the goals of health care improvements in quality, efficiency and safety. Improved health outcomes from the use of electronic health records (EHRs) by hospitals and physicians must be the goal of "meaningful use". Technology improvements in administrative workflow are necessary, but real-time access to meaningful and comprehensive data is fundamental to improving health care as a whole. Absent access to information and coordination of care across the continuum, improvements in health outcomes will not be realized.

## Additional Considerations

**Phase-in approach.** The definition of "meaningful use" must scale over time and start with the technologies that exist today. The definition should not mandate specific technologies or development methods. Continuous innovation must be encouraged so technology will continue to meet the needs of consumers, clinicians, payers, public health and other stakeholders. This continuous improvement will move the healthcare system toward the goals of greater patient safety, improved efficiency, reduced costs, and better health outcomes.

## Microsoft Health Vision

Microsoft appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important issue. Microsoft is committed to improving health around the world through software innovation. Over the past 12 years, Microsoft has steadily increased its investments in health, with a focus on addressing the challenges of health providers, health and social services organizations, payers, consumers and life sciences companies worldwide. Microsoft closely collaborates with a broad ecosystem of partners and develops its own powerful health solutions, such as Amalga and HealthVault. Microsoft envisions a connected health ecosystem, allowing patients and physicians to create a dynamic, learning healthcare system.

Together, Microsoft and its industry partners are working to advance a vision of unifying health information and making it more readily available, ensuring the best quality of life and affordable care for everyone. We look forward to working with the NCVHS Executive Committee to ensure that the term "meaningful use" is appropriately developed to improve health care outcomes.