



March 27, 2017

William W. Stead, M.D.
Chair
National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road
Hyattsville, MD 20782-2002

Dear Dr. Stead:

I am writing to extend my sincere appreciation to you and all the members of the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) for the recommendations submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) earlier this month on the de-identification of protected health information under HIPAA. De-identification is a critical tool for protecting individuals' privacy while still enabling uses of health information to improve individual and population health.

The Department greatly appreciates the effort put forth by NCVHS at your May 2016 hearing and in your subsequent deliberations. Your comprehensive recommendations identify important considerations and present significant and expert advice on issues pertaining to de-identification of protected health information under HIPAA. I have asked the HHS Office for Civil Rights to consider the Committee's recommendations, including the suggested actions that can be taken now to improve upon how the de-identification standard is implemented by the health care sector.

I thank you and the Committee for your dedication and commitment to providing recommendations to the Department to help us ensure that HIPAA's protections of health information privacy remain in place as we foster greater innovation within the health data environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deven McGraw" with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Deven McGraw, J.D.
Deputy Director, Health Information Privacy