

AMA, Other Physician Groups, Urge Congress to Fix Meaningful-Use Rules

November 3, 2015 - A coalition of 111 medical societies led by the **American Medical Association** is urging Congress to “refocus” the federal requirements for providers under the electronic health records incentive payment program.

One of those medical groups is the Texas Medical Association, which made a **similar plea** for congressional intervention Monday.

In a letter to House and Senate leaders, the physician groups said “congressional action to refocus this program is urgently needed before physicians, frustrated by the near impossibility of compliance with meaningless and ill-informed bureaucratic requirements, abandon the program completely.”

Congress included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 a mandate that the conditions for provider participation—the so-called meaningful-use requirements—be ratcheted up over time. But the law left it to HHS to determine how high and how fast.

The physicians' letter said the CMS “has continued to layer requirement on top of requirement, usually without any real understanding of the way health care is delivered at the exam room level.”

“What has emerged from this morass of regulation is a system that relegates physicians to the role of data entry clerks, filling the patient record with unnecessary documentation requirements unrelated to the provision of quality care,” the letter said. “In addition, the program has failed to focus on interoperability and has instead created new barriers to easily exchanging data and information across care settings.”

The physician groups lauded the CMS for its “modest improvements” to Stage 2 meaningful-use requirements that are now in use in updated rules **released Oct. 6**. But they blasted the agency for laying out “more challenging requirements for Stage 3 (effective for some as soon as 2017)... focusing heavily on measure thresholds and excessive documentation requirements rather than improving interoperability.”

“We believe that the success of the program hinges on a laser-like focus on promoting interoperability and allowing innovation to flourish as vendors respond to the demands of physicians and hospitals,” the letter said.

From the Vital Signs blog by Joseph Conn, posted November 3, 2015, at:
<http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20151103/BLOG/151109959>