The Honorable John Dingell, Chair
U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The IEEE-USA would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Committee on Energy and Commerce for passage of H.R.6357, the "PRO(TECH)T Act of 2008." As an organization of technical professionals, we understand and fully support the use of leading-edge information technology to ensure the quality and reliability of healthcare delivery systems, while respecting the privacy and security of patient health information and improving the cost-efficiency of health care.

We support making permanent the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We understand that realizing the goal of making an electronic health record available to every citizen by 2014 is a long-term process, and creates a need for oversight and direction.

IEEE-USA is deeply concerned about the state of our healthcare system and believes significant changes are necessary. We believe that development of a National Health Information Network (NHIN), adoption of an online electronic health record (EHR), and providing patient access to and control over personal health information by means of a Personal Health Record (PHR), will help to increase the efficiency of our health care system, restrain rising healthcare costs, and reduce medical errors.

We support the requirement for a Federal study of policy changes needed to facilitate the adoption of technology, including EHRs, in aging services. This highlights the importance of providing quality health care to our older adult population.

We also support the awarding of grants by the National Coordinator to eligible entities to facilitate the purchase and enhance the utilization of health information technology systems. IEEE-USA feels that providing such support will improve the quality of healthcare in underserved areas, and enable small private practice clinics to share in the benefits of modern health information technology.
Finally, we must not overlook the importance of protecting the privacy and security of sensitive personal healthcare information. We feel that H.R. 6357 provides the necessary strengthening and clarification of existing privacy and security regulations required to guarantee protection against fraud and invasion of privacy.

IEEE-USA is an organizational unit of the IEEE. It was created in 1973 to advance the public good and promote the careers and public policy interests of the more than 215,000 electrical, electronics, computer and software engineers who are U.S. members of the IEEE. The IEEE is the world's largest technical professional society. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Deborah Rudolph in our Washington office at (202) 530-8332 or email at d.rudolph@ieee.org.

Sincerely,

Russell J. Lefevre
IEEE-USA President

RJL/dr:bc

[A copy of this letter was faxed to all Members of the US House Committee on Energy and Commerce, 08/06/08.]