



**NHIN Workgroup Meeting
Testimony of Martin Crane, M.D., Chair
Federation of State Medical Boards
December 16, 2009**

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Martin Crane, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States. Joining me is Dr. Humayun Chaudhry, FSMB President and Chief Executive Officer. I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today and to provide you with a brief overview of the Federation's rich history of collecting, managing and reporting data used in medical licensing and physician credentialing and other venues.

The Federation of State Medical Boards is a national non-profit organization whose members are the seventy (70) state medical licensing and disciplinary boards of the U.S. and its Territories. Since its beginning in 1912, the Federation has worked to develop what today serves as the leading and most comprehensive, verified central repository of U.S. physician licensing and credentialing information.

At the core of our physician-data collection and management processes are the Physician Data Center and the Federation Credential Verification Service, or FCVS. Both the Physician Data Center and FCVS require the ongoing management and updating of complex data sets and data storage and information-sharing systems. The Physician Data Center receives data directly from a wide-ranging web of organizations throughout the United States, including state medical boards, the Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services, the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, the United States Medical Licensing Examination, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and international medical licensing authorities.

The data collected for the Center includes provider-specific information on MD's, DO's, and physician assistants. With more than one million records, this nationally-consolidated data bank of U.S. health providers is used to supply state medical boards and health care credentialing entities -- such as hospitals, payers, government agencies, certifying organizations -- and the public with critical information about physicians, including disciplinary, licensing, and biographical details. This information is also available to the public via the Internet.

In addition to the Physician Data Center, the Federation established the Federation Credentials Verification Service in September 1996 to provide a centralized, uniform process for state medical boards to obtain a verified, primary source record of a physician's core medical credentials. This service is designed to streamline the credentialing process and reduce the workload. The system creates a more efficient process for both physicians who need their credentials primary-source verified and for institutions that are reviewing and utilizing these credentials. Time is saved and duplication reduced by our system, which efficiently gathers, verifies and permanently stores the physician's and/or physician assistant's credentials in a central and secure repository at the Federation's offices in Euless, Texas. Having all of the work done and the systems used within the U.S. provides the advantage of secure available data at times of state/national emergency and reduces national security issues. Our familiarity with statutory licensing and credentialing requirements creates more efficiencies.

FCVS obtains primary source verification of medical education, postgraduate training, examination history, board action history, board certification and identity. This repository of information allows a physician and/or physician assistant to establish a confidential, lifetime professional portfolio that is continuously maintained and updated by FSMB in a secure environment and which can be forwarded, at the physician's request, to any state medical board, hospital, health care or any other entity that has established an agreement with FCVS. Since its inception, FCVS has processed in excess of 100,000 portfolios and continues to grow in both size and sophistication.

As a part of its ongoing commitment to the highest and most current standards of information technology, the FSMB recently began a major investment in technology designed to significantly enhance its capabilities for verifying physician credentials through FCVS, which are expected to help pave the way for a new era of more efficient and streamlined medical licensure and credential verification in other venues. In the near future, we will have the secure, physician-directed capability to "tease" out specific verified data sets that can be electronically transferred to hospitals, health plan networks and other organizations in need of credentialing information. This will provide the entire health care system, including physicians, with efficiency on a grand scale. In addition to the current credentialing elements, we are constructing a future system that could accommodate performance data in an initiative to pay attention to healthcare quality, patient safety and physician-practice improvement.

The Federation's FCVS is aligned with the organization's strategic vision of evolving all its data processes and capabilities to remain at the leading edge of information technology. We see ourselves as a centralized and comprehensive resource of robust and verified information for physician and other healthcare provider credentialing, regulation and healthcare policy development and implementation.

In addition to these efforts, FSMB is working with the state medical boards and other partners to improve license portability through improved data retrieval storage and transfer processes. With improved license portability, physician credentials can be more expeditiously reviewed and licenses granted to allow them to practice in multiple states. As telemedicine grows, as physicians become more mobile in their careers, and as access-demands increase, more physicians will likely be faced with this issue. The credentialing process can be complex but we have begun to develop a process to simplify this. We have combined our FCVS credentialing service with a more standardized licensing procedure, the Uniform Application for Physician State Licensure, which seeks to unify some elements of licensure from state to state. The Uniform Application stores physician data so that physicians may reuse the information if they decide to apply for licensure in additional states.

This process has been developed in close coordination with the nation's state medical boards, and recognizes the varying needs and conditions for medical practice in each state. The Uniform Application is currently being used or implemented in 24 states, helping streamline and standardize the licensure process while maintaining state medical board autonomy. More states are expected to be on-board soon.

Through these and other activities, FSMB serves as a key information and data hub in the complex medical regulatory and credentialing process. We are committed to following a path that enhances our capabilities and ensures the highest standards of data and process integrity. Since our inception nearly 100 years ago, the secure exchange of information has been one of the core pillars of FSMB's mandate and we remain pledged to it and pledged to work with all to improve it.

With our experience in physician-information systems and a historical focus on secure data transmission, we believe FSMB can serve as a resource to NHIN as it helps move forward a national effort to organize and incorporate a creative health-information strategy and infrastructure.

We look forward to collaborating as a partner in this effort, which we believe is vitally important to the nation's healthcare future.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important discussion, and look forward to assisting this committee in any way we can. Thank you. Dr. Chaudhry and I would be happy to address any questions that you may have at this time.