

REPUBLICANS

DAVID P. ROE, TENNESSEE, CHAIRMAN

GUS M. BILIRAKIS, FLORIDA  
MIKE COFFMAN, COLORADO  
BILL FLORES, TEXAS  
AMATA RADEWAGEN, AMERICAN SAMOA  
MIKE BOST, ILLINOIS  
BRUCE POLIQUIN, MAINE  
NEAL DUNN, FLORIDA  
JODEY ARRINGTON, TEXAS  
CLAY HIGGINS, LOUISIANA  
JACK BERGMAN, MICHIGAN  
JIM BANKS, INDIANA  
JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN, PUERTO RICO  
BRIAN MAST, FLORIDA

JON TOWERS, STAFF DIRECTOR

DEMOCRATS

TIM WALZ, MINNESOTA, RANKING

MARK TAKANO, CALIFORNIA  
JULIA BROWNLEY, CALIFORNIA  
ANN KUSTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
BETO O'ROURKE, TEXAS  
KATHLEEN RICE, NEW YORK  
J. LUIS CORREA, CALIFORNIA  
CONOR LAMB, PENNSYLVANIA  
ELIZABETH ESTY, CONNECTICUT  
SCOTT PETERS, CALIFORNIA

RAY KELLEY  
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

# U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

335 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

October 10, 2018

The Honorable James Byrne  
Acting Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Acting Deputy Secretary Byrne:

As the VA senior leader ultimately responsible for EHR Modernization, I write you to express my concern over VA's apparent loss of focus on the open-Application Program Interface (API) gateway interoperability platform concept that VA has explored for over two years and the "open-API pledge" that the department encouraged hundreds of developers to sign in March of this year.

As you know, the open-API gateway idea has gone by various names, originally the Digital Health Platform, then the Digital Veterans Platform, and later Lighthouse. Unfortunately, it seems to have lost momentum. The Committee has previously advocated for the concept, though there were some differences of opinion in how VA envisioned it. Chairman Roe encouraged former Secretary Shulkin to implement a best-in-class EHR within the context of an interoperability platform and not merely build interoperability capabilities inside an EHR, and the idea became a major focus of the interoperability assessment that VA commissioned from the MITRE Corporation before signing the Cerner contract.

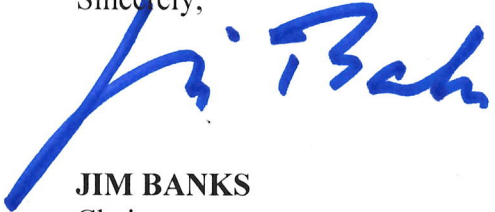
Even beyond medical records exchange, VA needs a flexible platform to translate data coming in from multiple EHRs and on which to build (and so its private sector partners can build) interfaces to and from medical practices' billing systems, insurance companies, external applications, veterans' devices, and one day Medicare and TRICARE's systems. To meet the challenge, the interoperability platform should include alongside the open-API gateway a cloud broker capability to integrate multiple cloud environments.

I have no doubt that you are focused on the challenge of anticipating technological evolution over the EHR Modernization program's expected 10-year implementation timeline. It may be impossible to anticipate what is to come, yet the need to "future-proof" the technology that VA is acquiring is very real. Moving forward with the open-API gateway and sustaining the "open-API pledge" are important steps to do that. Even with the unprecedented resources that Congress has given VA for health IT modernization, the department cannot possibly buy or develop every capability. Luckily, there are literally hundreds of startups and established companies that are

eager to offer their solutions, many of which have already been created at private expense. What is needed is a culture to welcome them and a platform to support them.

Please advise whether the open-API gateway concept is still under consideration and what timeframe and parameters, if any, are in place to make a decision. Please also explain whether VA is still committed to the "open-API pledge" and what is being done to promote and advance it. If you have any questions or wish to discuss these matters, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Mr. William Mallison, Majority Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Technology Modernization at (202) 225-1900 or [william.mallison@mail.house.gov](mailto:william.mallison@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



**JIM BANKS**

Chairman

Subcommittee on Technology Modernization

JB/wm