

April 11, 2016

The Honorable Andy Slavitt  
Acting Administrator  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Acting Administrator Slavitt:

We are writing to express our concerns with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) upcoming release of the Hospital Compare Star Ratings, scheduled to be publicly released in April 2016. While we support the public reporting of provider quality data, we are concerned that the current Star Ratings system may not accurately take into account hospitals that treat patients with low socioeconomic status or multiple complex chronic conditions. We appreciate CMS's recognition in previous rulemaking of the effects these patient populations have on Medicare Advantage and Part D plans and urge CMS to give similar consideration to the similar effects on the Hospital Compare Star Ratings system.

We are concerned that the Star Rating system may be misleading to consumers due to flaws in the measures that underpin the ratings. Many prominent hospitals that are in the top echelon of other quality rating reports, and handle the most complex procedures and patients, may receive 1 or 2 stars (out of a possible 5), indicating that they have the poorest quality in comparison to all other hospitals. As the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) and other researchers have noted, these measures are not appropriately adjusted for socioeconomic status and patient complexity.

In addition, CMS has provided insufficient details regarding the methodology used to determine these star ratings and has not provided hospitals with the data used to derive the ratings. As a result, we have heard from hospitals in our states that have been unable to replicate or evaluate CMS's work to ensure that the methodology is accurate or fair. It is clear that additional time is necessary for hospitals and stakeholders to thoroughly review the data and understand the impact of the current methodology to ensure the validity and accuracy of the information before it is publicly released. We respectfully request that you delay release of the star ratings to provide the necessary time to more closely examine the star rating methodology, analyze its impact on different types of hospitals, and provide more transparent information regarding the calculation of the ratings to determine accuracy.

We urge CMS to work with Congress as well as with the hospital community affected by these star ratings to resolve these concerns. Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Rob Portman  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Mark Kirk  
United States Senator



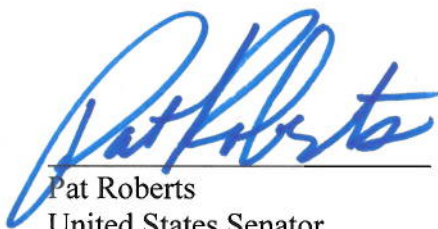
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Pat Roberts  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Jerry Moran  
United States Senator



Barbara Mikulski  
United States Senator



James M. Inhofe  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Kelly A. Ayotte  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Richard Burr  
United States Senator



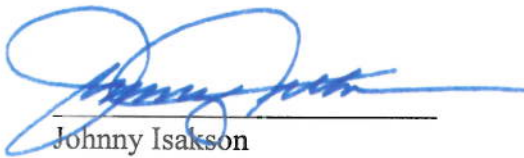
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator




Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



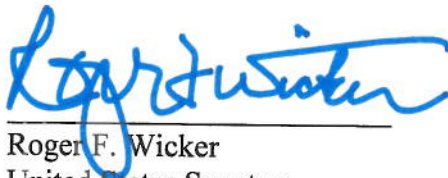
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



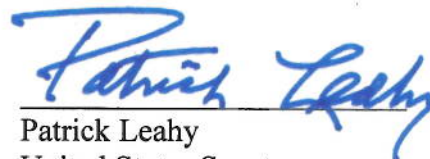
Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin  
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Steve Daines  
United States Senator



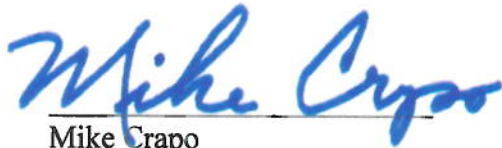
Gary Peters  
United States Senator



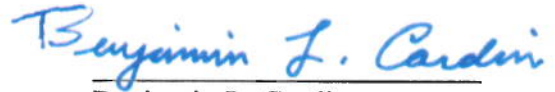
Thad Cochran  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



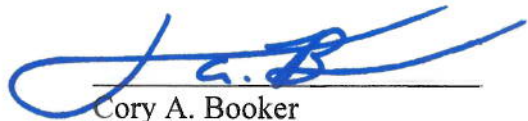
Jeff Sessions  
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly  
United States Senator



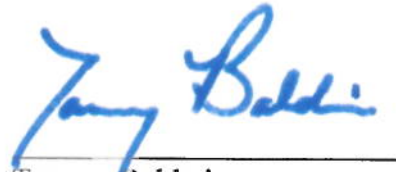
John Thune  
United States Senator



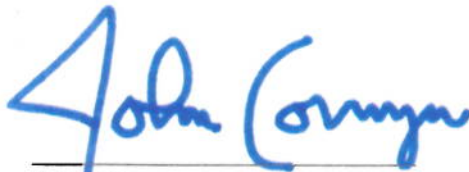
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Cory Gardner  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

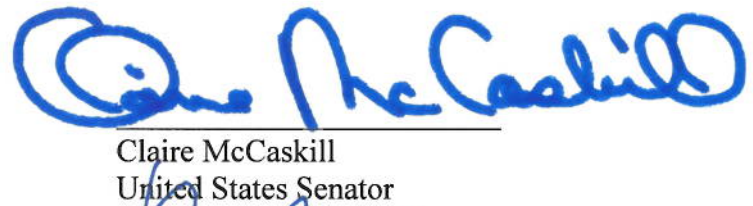


John Cornyn  
United States Senator

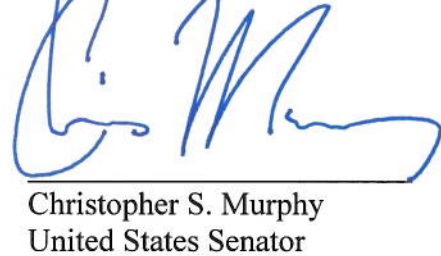


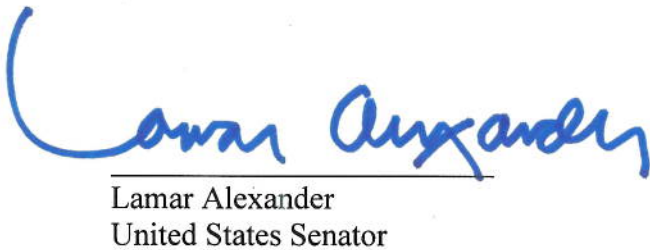
Bill Nelson  
United States Senator

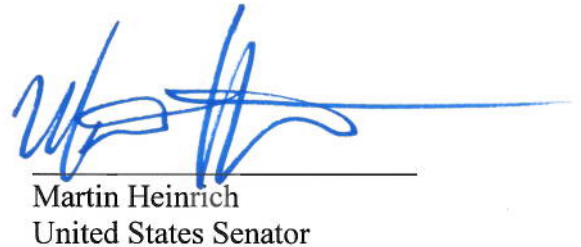
  
John Barrasso  
United States Senator

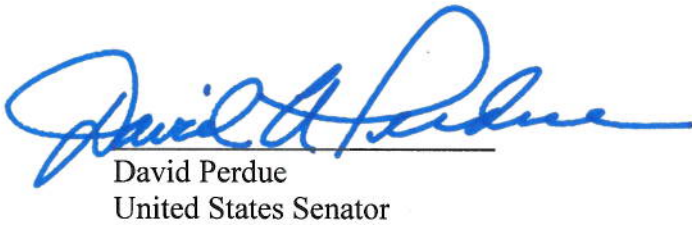
  
Claire McCaskill  
United States Senator

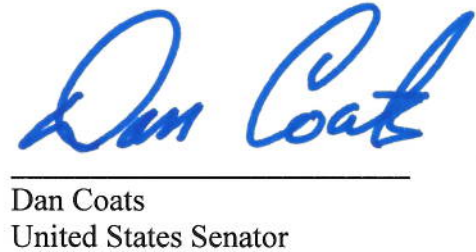
  
Michael B. Enzi  
United States Senator

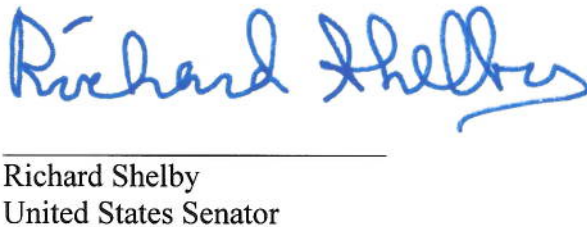
  
Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

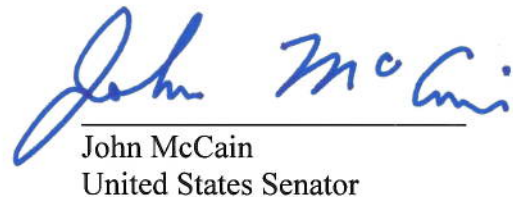
  
Lamar Alexander  
United States Senator

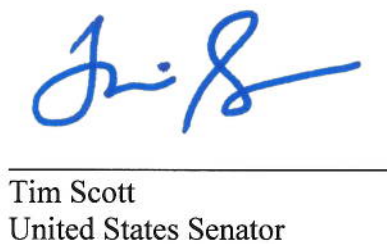
  
Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

  
David Perdue  
United States Senator

  
Dan Coats  
United States Senator


  
Richard Shelby  
United States Senator

  
John McCain  
United States Senator

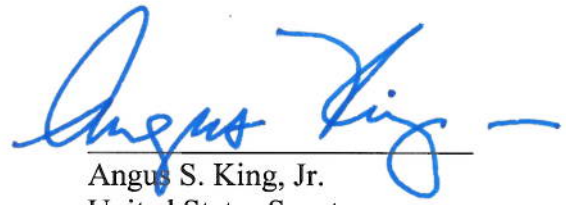
  
Tim Scott  
United States Senator

  
Roy Blunt  
United States Senator


  
Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator


  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

  
John Hoeven  
United States Senator


  
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

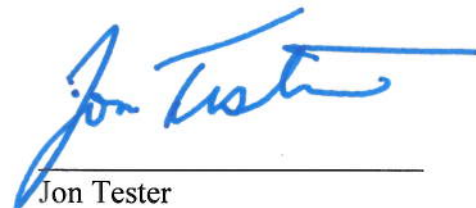
  
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

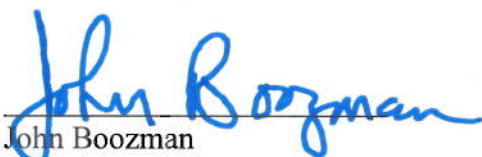
  
Tom Udall  
United States Senator

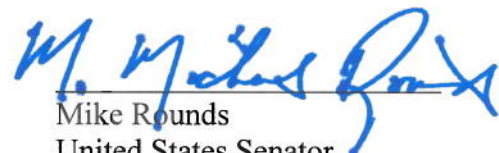
  
Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator

  
Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator

  
Bob Corker  
United States Senator

  
Jon Tester  
United States Senator

  
John Boozman  
United States Senator

  
Mike Rounds  
United States Senator