

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

January 22, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Madam Secretary:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is conducting oversight of the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). The Committee is concerned about a recent story by the *Associated Press* (AP) that sensitive consumer information submitted by visitors to HealthCare.gov—such as age, income, and smoking habits—is being shared with “private companies that specialize in advertising and analyzing Internet data for performance and marketing.”<sup>1</sup> We are writing to request information related to the scope of the information that has been shared, as well as the controls in place to protect the personally identifiable information of consumers.

The AP reported that third-party companies may be obtaining a consumer’s age, income, zip code, and the internet address associated with a user’s computer.<sup>2</sup> According to the AP, advertising and data analytics firms could then use this information by combining it with other information in the firms’ databases.<sup>3</sup> This type of information is often used for targeted marketing on a household-by-household basis.<sup>4</sup> According to the AP:

Tracking consumers’ Internet searches is a lucrative business, helping Google, Facebook and others tailor ads to customers’ interests. Because your computer and mobile devices can be assigned an individual signature, profiles of Internet users can be pieced together, generating lists that have commercial value.<sup>5</sup>

An independent tech expert who evaluated HealthCare.gov for the AP was “surprised” by the connections to third parties.<sup>6</sup> Mehdi Daoudi, CEO of Catchpoint Systems, told the AP, “Personally, I look at this . . . and I don’t know what is going on between the government and Facebook, and Google, and Twitter. Why is that there?”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Jack Gillum, *Government health care website quietly sharing personal data*, ASSOC. PRESS, Jan. 20, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

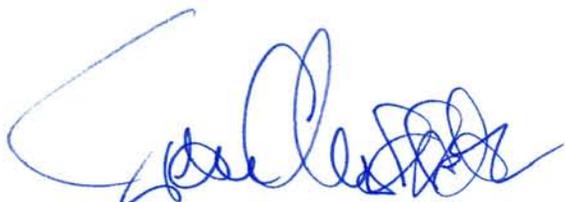
In order to assist the Committee in its oversight of this issue, please arrange for a briefing to the Committee as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 4, 2015, regarding the following:

Identify all third parties with whom HealthCare.gov shares sensitive information. For each, specify:

- a. The data elements shared;
- b. What restrictions, if any, are placed on the use of the shared data; and,
- c. What controls are in place to ensure that the information collected is not used commercially.

Please contact Sean Hayes or Meinan Goto of the Committee Staff at 202-225-5074 to make arrangements for a briefing, or if you have any questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz  
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Minority Member



Jim Jordan  
Member



Mark Meadows  
Member



Will Hurd  
Member