Richard T. Clark
Chairman, President &
Chief Executive Officer

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May 21, 2008

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senate
Ranking Member, Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Herbert Kohl
United States Senate
Chairman, Special Committee on Aging
G-31 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Grassley and Kohl:

As a company that researches, manufactures and markets life-saving and life-improving medicines and vaccines to meet the healthcare needs of people worldwide, we realize that the transparency of our actions plays an important role in maintaining the highest level of public trust. Therefore, we appreciate your efforts to enhance the transparency of the financial support from industry to physicians.

To that end, we are pleased to support your proposed "Physician Payment Sunshine Act" ("Sunshine Act") which would create a uniform, national program for disclosing certain financial relations between industry and physicians. We believe that such a program, implemented in consultation with industry and the physician community, could provide helpful information to the public. We especially appreciate that your revised draft legislation does not impose substantial additional burdens on physicians who are already subject to many demands that take them away from patient care.

We appreciate many of the changes you have made to your Sunshine Act. First, we are glad that your legislation now directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services ("HHS") to create a system under which physicians can verify the accuracy of the information submitted about them before such information is made public. By exempting from reporting items of minimal value, your legislation will enable patients and others using the database to focus on more significant payments and reduce unnecessary data collection costs. By directing HHS to include information in the database that describes the payments, the legislation will provide patients and others with the context for the payments. And, by clearly separating out payments related to clinical research, we hope this legislation will help ensure that these payments, in particular, are not subject to misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

We commend you for drafting legislation that would create a single, national system for the reporting of information. This national system is essential as you seek to create a workable framework for reporting. Moreover, by creating a single national system of reporting, you eliminate burdens on states, companies and physicians that could otherwise result from the development and operation of multiple, inconsistent collection and disclosure systems.

We look forward to working with you as this draft legislation moves forward and urge you to continue your consultation with all affected groups, including physicians and their organizations, to ensure that their legitimate concerns are addressed.

Sincerely,

cc: The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Gordon Smith
Ranking Member, Senate Special Committee on Aging