

**From:** [Keanya Briscoe-Dodson](#)  
**To:** [BOCrfc2015](#)  
**Subject:** Broadband Opportunity Council  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 10, 2015 1:59:13 PM  
**Attachments:** [Dr Kaelber BOC Letter.pdf](#)

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Good Afternoon

Attached please find comments of Dr. David Kaelber, Chief Medical Informatics Officer of The MetroHealth System, for submission to the Broadband Opportunities Council.

Thank you,  
Keanya

**Keanya Briscoe-Dodson**

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**MetroHealth's Mission: Leading the way to a healthier you and a healthier community through service, teaching, discovery and teamwork.**

Conceptual drawing of how the MetroHealth main campus could be transformed.



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June 10, 2015

Dear Members of the Broadband Opportunity Council:

I am the Chief Medical Informatics Officer for MetroHealth, the non-profit, county-affiliated health care system which is the safety-net hospital for residents of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, Ohio. I oversee all of MetroHealth's personal health record, health information exchange, and meaningful use efforts, and serve as the lead physician for all medical informatics issues, including all issues related to outpatient, inpatient, and emergency department electronic health record systems.

MetroHealth has offered the Epic electronic health record personal health record application (called MyChart) to our patients since 2011. We now have over 75,000 patients with MyChart accounts who have actually logged in -- almost 40% of our total patient population. We're gratified that growing numbers of our patients are learning the value of online tools for improved care, knowledge and convenience.

At some point, however, growth in MyChart adoption by our patients is going to run up against a major obstacle: the large percentage of Cleveland residents who lack broadband Internet access of any kind. The most recent American Community Survey found that 57% of Cleveland households with annual incomes below \$35,000 still lack home Internet service of any kind, including mobile broadband. Three out of five households in our city have incomes below \$35,000; and this lower-income majority, who are less likely than not to have Internet access, include a large share of MetroHealth's patients.

MetroHealth can already see Cleveland's economic digital divide reflected in our MyChart user data. Between January 2012 and May 2015, only about 20% of our Medicaid patients logged in to a MyChart account, compared to 36% of our patients covered by commercial insurance. There is good reason for concern that this disparity may widen, as continuing efforts to add MyChart users run up against the limited supply of lower-income patients who are actually able to respond.

Cleveland has dedicated community-based programs working to close the city's gap in digital access and literacy. MetroHealth is looking for ways to collaborate with these and other partners to help more of our patients to become "PHR-ready". But these efforts will require resources that will be difficult to find for a local community acting on its own.

So I want to take this opportunity to ask the Broadband Opportunity Council, and the Department of Health and Human Services in particular, to consider steps we can take as a nation to pursue the national goal of implementing electronic health information and access without, at the same time, creating a new health disparity for disconnected lower-income Americans.



The solutions may be as simple as adding an Internet service option to the low-income Lifeline program, as FCC Chairman Wheeler is suggesting, or providing a modest funding stream for hospital/community partnerships to support PHR recruitment with computer training and connection options. I don't know. But I do know that the problem is real; it is inherent in the Government's commitment (which we at MetroHealth share) to the broadest possible adoption of EHRs and PHRs in our 21st century healthcare system; and it needs to be addressed.

MetroHealth is ready to help.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Kaelber', written in a cursive style.

**David Kaelber, MD, PhD, MPH, FAAP, FACP**

*Board Certified in Clinical Informatics*

*Chief Medical Informatics Officer and Vice-President of Health Informatics*

*Director, Center for Health Informatics and Patient Engagement*

*Director, Center for Clinical Informatics Research and Education*

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