



American Institute of CPAs
1455 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004-1081

March 12, 2013

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Chairman
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
Ranking Member
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings:

Thank you for your strong leadership in promoting new technologies that allow users to better understand and compare reported financial information. On behalf of the nearly 386,000 members of the American Institute of the Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), I am writing in support of your efforts to advance openness and transparency in the federal government and to enact legislation requiring federal government agencies to utilize non-proprietary data reporting standards for reporting financial and performance data.

As you know, the AICPA has long been a supporter of the data transparency provisions that have been included in multiple pieces of legislation, including the DATA Act (H.R. 2146) as passed last year by the House of Representatives, the Family and Child Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-34), and the Financial Industry Transparency Act, which was considered as part of the Dodd-Frank Act and later introduced as a stand-alone bill (H.R. 6038) in 2010.

The AICPA strongly believes that the implementation of data reporting standards will benefit policymakers in Congress and at federal agencies, those who do business or receive benefits from the federal government and all American taxpayers. As you and your Committee consider bills intended to create more transparency in government, the AICPA encourages you to require that such legislation call for data reporting standards, such as eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL), that, to the extent practicable, incorporate a widely-accepted, non-proprietary, searchable, platform-independent and computer-readable format. We believe that such standards already exist and can be leveraged to specifically support the reporting of financial and performance-related data, regardless of the reporting need or software used and that the benefits derived from the use of data standards allow for consumption of more comparable information from one reporting situation to the next.

Ultimately, the AICPA believes that using data standards will enhance the accuracy and transparency of financial and performance information produced by the federal government agencies and others. Data standards like XBRL provide the best detailed yet customizable approach to gathering, transmitting and consuming data. By utilizing consistent data standards, both the federal government's and the American public's ability to analyze financial and performance information will be significantly improved, providing an unprecedented level of transparency of federal government operations.

We are happy to discuss with you any area where implementation of data standards can further enhance reporting and make it more valuable to all types of stakeholders. If you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Diana Huntress Deem at 202.434.9276 or ddeem@aicpa.org.

Sincerely,

Barry C. Melancon, CPA, CGMA
President and CEO

