Insurance and Real Estate Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7173
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CONTRACTS BETWEEN HEALTH INSURERS AND OPTOMETRISTS.

Vote Date: 3/14/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/28/2019

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Rep. Anne Meiman Hughes, 135th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:
To provide that no insurer, health care center, fraternal benefit society, hospital service corporation, medical service corporation or other entity delivering, issuing for delivery, renewing, amending or continuing an individual or group vision plan in this state shall include in any contract with an optometrist any provision that requires the optometrist to accept as payment an amount set by such insurer, center, society, corporation or entity for products provided to an insured or enrollee that are not covered benefits under such insured's or enrollee's plan.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION:
None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Christopher Argo, Enfield Eye Associates, supports the bill as it adds to a current statute PA 15-122 a law that provides that an insurer mandate discounts in optometric services or procedures unless the insurer provides insurance coverage for those services. HB 7173 changes the bill help maintain the independence of CT doctors of optometry and allow them to conduct their practices and set fees they feel best suit their community.

Brian Lynch, Ph.D Connecticut Association of Optometrists, supports the bill because it will prevent insurers from shifting the cost of their promotions to small businesses and patients outside their plan, as well as prevent the escalation of fees and prevent price fixing for non-covered services.

Mark Ruchman, MD Versant Health, separating discounts from vison plans benefits will break the valuable relationship between eye examinations and the purchase of frames and
lenses. Patients need added access to not only vision examinations but also eye equipment benefits.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**The CT Society of the Eye Physicians,** oppose the bill because it is exclusive and legislates an arbitrary and unfair economic advantage for a specific subset of providers unrelated to any specific required skills or knowledge,** see attached language and additional information…for Eye care carve out.

**Julian Roberts, ED, The National Association of Vision Care Plans,** opposes the bill due to it going too far the value of the consistent and bargained for discounts to consumers and providers alike. It limits the optometrists to market different options to consumers in Connecticut and pushes all consumers towards higher cost alternatives. There needs to be a provision which allows not only vision services but also some provision for eye care.

Reported by: Terri Reid

Date: 3.27.19