

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-15

Title: AN ACT ENCOURAGING PRIMARY AND PREVENTIVE CARE.

Vote Date: 3/10/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/1/2022

File No.: 39

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Request of the Governor pursuant to Joint Rule 9
Sen. Saud Anwar

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires that provider-issued insurance cards must include the insured's designated in-network primary care provider (PCP) and their contact information as well as telehealth network contact information. If the insured does not designate a PCP, then the card must display the telephone number for a hotline to provide the individual with a list of local in-network PCPs accepting new patients or the address of an internet site for the same purpose. These provisions seek to make it easier for patients in need to contact their PCP, find a new such provider, or receive assistance via telehealth in order to reduce the burden on emergency departments for care that otherwise could have been provided in a less stressful and more affordable setting.

This bill also seeks to improve access to preventive care by requiring fully insured health plans to offer a form of the Health Enhancement Program (HEP) currently offered by the State of Connecticut Health Plan. The program seeks to increase rates of compliance for preventative care in order to reduce emergency room and doctors' office visits and as a result, reduce overall healthcare costs. Additionally, improving rates of preventative services result in quality-of-life benefits for plan participants.

Proposed Substitute Language

This change deleted primary care and primary care services definitions in order to allow patients to have more freedom to choose which provider to include on the card; no insured is required to participate in a HEP program; language regarding a listing of telehealth number; and allowing individuals to request an electronic card rather than hard copy.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Jonny Dach, Policy Director, Office of the Governor

The Governor's Office **supports** this bill because by providing individuals with preventative care this program affords opportunities to significantly reduce monthly healthcare costs and reduces costs in the long term by catching and treating issues early. Additionally this bill seeks to create stronger relationships between individuals and their primary care providers. When individuals have existing contact with a PCP, they are less likely to utilize emergency departments, saving time and money.

Natalie Braswell, State Comptroller, Office of the State Comptroller

The State Comptroller **supports** this bill because HEP programs significantly increase rates of compliance for preventative care. Many HEP participants have shared their stories with the office and specific instances of this program's success are included in the testimony.

Deidre Gifford, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Social Services

The Department of Social Services **supports** this bill because it would further encourage members to connect with their PCP on a regular basis and compliments the department's existing efforts to promote primary care.

Josh Hershman, Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Insurance Department

The Connecticut Insurance Department **supports** this bill because we know that patients tend to be healthier when they see their primary care physician regularly and receive appropriate preventative care. When illnesses are caught and treated early, not only does it lead to a healthier population, it should drive the cost of healthcare down which should reduce health insurance costs. Additionally, this bill puts primary care provider information at the fingertips of the insured.

Manisha Juthani, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health

The Connecticut Department of Public Health **supports** this bill because its goal is to increase preventative health screenings. This bill will help close the income gap that currently exists for cancer screenings.

Victoria Veltri, Executive Director, Connecticut Office of Health Strategy

The Office of Health Strategy **supports** this bill because it forwards the vision of more effective, efficient, and equitable primary care that better meets the needs of patients. This bill helps to ensure that patients can maintain their optimal health and access services they need to avoid the deterioration of conditions that lead to poor outcomes and increased costs.

Kevin Kelly, Connecticut Senate Republicans

This speaker's **opposing** testimony for this bill is the Senate Republican caucus's healthcare platform.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mathew Dimond, Connecticut Chiropractic Association

The Connecticut Chiropractic Association **supports** this bill, but is seeking a few minor language changes to ensure that chiropractors are included in this initiative. First, the word "and" in line 12 should be substituted for "or" and also the definition of "primary care services"

should be amended to include chiropractors who provide many of the same services as described to their patients each day.

Karen Siegel, Health Equity Solutions

This speaker **supports** the bill because the initiatives proposed are common sense measures for increasing awareness of primary care options and incentivizing engagement with primary care, particularly for underserved communities of color. Several recommendations were also included to better the bill including, ensuring that lists of in-network providers who are accepting new patients are kept up to date, listing costs of telehealth visits on the insurance card, and only incentivizing appointments and screenings that are truly accessible as to not penalize anyone of lower means.

Diana James, Radiological Society of Connecticut

Brian Lynch, Connecticut Association of Optometrists

Jason Prevelige, Connecticut Academy of PAs

Several speakers **support** the bill because of its goal of encouraging patients to complete screening exams using financial incentives such as lower premium costs, deductibles, and co-pays and its goal of strengthening relationships between patients and primary care providers.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Linda Bronstein

Thomas Burr, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Connecticut

Social Welfare Action Alliance, Connecticut

Jordan Fairchild, Keep the Promise Coalition

David Gedraitis

Karen Healy

Rose Reyes

Patricia Vener-Saavedra

Carol Scully, The Arc of Connecticut

Sheldon Toubman, Disability Rights Connecticut

Eileen Healy, Independence Northwest

Kathleen Flaherty, Connecticut Legal Rights Project

Several speakers **opposed** this bill because they were concerned that this bill would reduce access to care for patients, particularly the elderly, disabled, and those with mental illness.

Lynn Rapsilber, Connecticut Coalition of Advance Practice Nurses

The Connecticut Coalition of Advance Practice Nurses **opposes** this bill because nurse practitioners are not included under the definition of “primary care providers” even though they are licensed to provide a vast majority of these services.

Tim Gabriele, Medicare for All CT

Eileen O’Donnell

Kerri Colombo

A number of speakers **opposed** this bill because it would not provide any savings to the state or taxpayers, but would rather subsidize private insurance companies and would also take funding away from Medicaid.

Connecticut State Medical Society

This speaker **opposes** the bill because the definition of primary care services in two sections of the bill are incompatible with each other. Additionally, the definition of primary care services does not include routine gynecologic services and excludes obstetrician/gynecologists from the definition of a primary care provider.

Connecticut Association of Health Plans

This speaker **opposes** the bill because it would be extremely challenging to meet the ID card requirements as laid out in this bill because information is constantly changing and it would be costly and onerous to print and distribute the cards continuously to meet these requirements.

Reported by: Andrew Miano

Date: March 17, 2022