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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 5320 (as amended by House "A")\***

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING HOSPITAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill requires the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA), within available appropriations, to contract with a vendor to develop an online hospital financial assistance portal for patients and their families. The portal must be a navigation tool to help these individuals identify and apply for financial assistance at Connecticut hospitals.

Under the bill, the portal, may at least include (1) technical assistance and tools that streamline the application process for hospital financial assistance, (2) a screening tool to help patients determine their eligibility for assistance, and (3) information to help patients and family members avoid future medical debt.

The bill allows OHA to (1) consult with the Office of Policy and Management and publish on the OHA website information on the state's medical debt erasure initiative and (2) develop, in consultation with relevant organizations, recommendations on the initiative that may help patients and family members avoid future medical debt (e.g., ways to streamline the application process for hospital financial assistance).

Starting July 1, 2025, the bill requires hospitals with financial assistance programs to give OHA internet links for these programs. If hospitals revise their financial assistance applications or establish new financial assistance programs, they must notify OHA and give it any new related internet links within 30 days after doing so.

\*House Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill (File 149) with the provisions on OHA's hospital financial assistance portal for patients and families. By striking the underlying bill, it eliminates provisions

requiring hospitals to (1) give financial assistance to certain patients, regardless of immigration status, and set eligibility and application requirements; (2) include their financial assistance policies and associated data in the information they annually report to the Office of Health Strategy; (3) make available a plain language summary of their financial assistance policies in each language spoken by at least 5% of the population in the hospital's service area; and (4) train staff on the financial assistance programs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 24 Nay 13 (03/11/2024)

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 30 Nay 19 (04/12/2024)