



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Senate President Announces Major Legislation to Advance Massachusetts Health Care Reform

Electronic medical records and gift ban in place

(BOSTON, MA) – Senate President Therese Murray, along with her colleagues in the Senate, today announced major health care legislation that will make Massachusetts a national leader in the statewide adoption of electronic medical records and the first in the country to impose an outright ban on pharmaceutical marketing gifts of any value.

The Senate bill, An Act to Promote Cost Containment, Transparency and Efficiency in the Delivery of Quality Health Care, also addresses the critical areas of primary care access, transparency and efficient use of resources and technology to drive down escalating costs in our health care system.

“This legislation represents a defining moment for the Commonwealth,” Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) said. “Our efforts today are crucial to the future vitality of our health care system and our economy, and this bill makes good on the promise I made in October to propose bold measures to ensure the success of health care reform in Massachusetts.

The Senate President made today’s announcement at the UMass Medical School in Worcester and was joined by Senator Richard Moore (Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing), other senators, health care stakeholders, and UMass officials and faculty members.

“If we expect to realize the full promise of the state’s landmark health reform law – to achieve universal health coverage with safe, high quality and affordable care for all – this bill is vital,” said Senator Moore, who played a major role in drafting the legislation. “We must expand access to care, ensure a transparent system of quality improvement and cost containment, and improve the overall health of the people of Massachusetts.

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“This legislation, which Senate President Murray and I are filing with the support of our legislative colleagues, will move us aggressively toward these important goals and keep our state in the forefront of national health reform efforts. Health Reform II is a prescription for a healthy Commonwealth.”

The Senate bill requires statewide adoption and compatibility of electronic medical records by 2015, backed by a public commitment of \$25 million a year to accelerate the program. Physicians would have to show competency in the technology for medical board registration. The bill also sets a deadline of 2012 for statewide adoption of Computerized Physician Order Entry systems (CPOE). After this date, the use of CPOE would be required for hospital licensure.

“These initiatives will modernize the health care system, reduce waste and inefficiencies, and improve health care quality for every citizen of the Commonwealth,” President Murray said.

The gift-ban measure prohibits pharmaceutical agents from offering gifts and physicians from accepting gifts of any kind. The ban extends to physicians’ staff and family members. The legislation allows distribution of drug samples to doctors for the exclusive use of their patients.

“This bill is truly a collaborative effort,” President Murray said. “I want to congratulate senators Richard Moore, Mark Montigny, Karen Spilka, Robert O’Leary, Susan Fargo, Steven Baddour, Stephen Buoniconti, Gale Candaras, Steven Tolman and others who made this bill possible. I’m proud of the Senate’s work to make this a meaningful and comprehensive piece of legislation.”

Other highlights of the bill include:

- An increase in the workforce capacity of nurses and primary care physicians through loan forgiveness programs and expanded enrollment at the state medical school. The bill also allows patients to choose nurse practitioners as their primary care providers.
- A public-hearing requirement for hospitals and insurance companies to justify consumer costs and make cost-reduction recommendations. The legislation also authorizes public review of any insurance company submitting rate increases above 7 percent.
- A statewide standard for uniform billing and coding among health care providers and insurance companies to reduce operational expenses of claims processing.
- An enhanced “determination of need” process to help maintain standards of quality and ensure the efficient and equitable deployment of health care resources across the Commonwealth, avoiding the costly duplication of services.
- A Purchasing Reform initiative to coordinate public and private “pay-for-performance” efforts to drive quality and efficiency in the market.
- Authorization of the Department of Insurance to investigate the costs of medical malpractice coverage for health care providers.