

3/22/2016

The Honorable Ed Hernandez
Senate Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Senate Bill 1135 (Monning) – Health care coverage: notice of timely access to care – SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Hernandez,

CALPIRG supports Senate Bill 1135, an act to require health plans and insurers to notify consumers about their right to timely care and language assistance. The bill also requires insurers to include either the toll-free consumer call center numbers of the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) or the California Department of Insurance (CDI) on consumers' insurance cards.

California has strong laws governing timely care and language assistance. But a May 2015 survey by Consumers Union entitled "Californians Face Out-of-Network Bills, Don't Know Where to Turn for Help," found that 85 percent of Californians polled did not know which state agency deals with health insurance complaints and that 71 percent were unaware of their right to appeal an insurance decision to the state or to an independent medical expert if a health plan refuses coverage for medical services.

SB 1135 (Monning) requires health plans and insurers to:

- Notify patients of their right to timely access and language access through existing documents and communication channels.
- Provide doctors, hospitals and other health providers with information about timely access requirements. This information helps doctors to better serve their patients, especially when they are making referrals to other doctors or specialists.
- Require the toll-free phone number to consumer call centers operated by DMHC or CDI to be included on consumers' insurance cards. This would apply to both commercial and Medi-Cal managed care plans. Putting the right 800 number on the insurance card will help consumers know where to call.

Californians should know that they have a right to expedient healthcare provided in their own language, and know who to complain to if they are concerned their needs are not being met. Consumers who do not know of these rights are vulnerable to delayed and unhelpful care or misunderstandings. Knowing their rights will help Californians access high-quality health care that meets their linguistic and medical needs.

We respectfully ask for your support for SB 1135.

Sincerely,



Emily Rusch
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