



SENATOR JOSÉ MENÉNDEZ
DISTRICT 26

Media Release:

Monday, September 2, 2019

Contact: Cynthia Cabral, Communications Director

210-733-6604 | cell: 210-639-8686 | Cynthia.Cabral@senate.texas.gov

Sen. José Menéndez Proud to Pass the 'Patient Health Care Protection' Law Helping Patients Avoid Surprise Bills and Reducing Barriers to Care

San Antonio, Texas – The "**Patient Health Care Protection**" Bill (SB 1742) was authored by State Senator José Menéndez; coauthored by Sen. Dawn Buckingham, Sen. Charles Schwertner and Sen. Judith Zaffirini; and sponsored by House Representative Julie Johnson. This legislation won unanimous bipartisan vote from the Senate and became law on Sept. 1, 2019.

It works on behalf of both healthcare consumers and providers requiring a health plan's network directory to clearly identify which medical providers are in-network at network facilities as well as key reforms to prior authorization protocols, ensuring patients are getting value out of the premiums they pay to health insurance companies.

Current health plan provider directories have not typically displayed this information in a uniform or user-friendly manner. This law requires a health plan's network directory to clearly identify which radiologists, anesthesiologists, pathologists, emergency physicians, neonatologists, and assistant surgeons are fully covered by the insurance.

These online health plan directories provide consumers accurate information about the providers that are in health plan provider networks when shopping for coverage. This information of the in-network status of each facility and provider is obtained through an easily accessible searchable list.

SB 1742 also incorporated additional key amendments that were negotiated to provide new protections and prevent prior authorization requirements by insurers from negatively impacting the health insurance market. The added amendments require greater transparency with prior authorizations and mandates that utilization reviews be conducted by a Texas-licensed physician in the same or similar specialty as the

physician requesting the service or procedure to ensure the highest quality of patient care while preventing non-medical interference with patient care.

Furthermore, the new law creates an interim committee to evaluate the prior authorization processes and their effect on Texas patients getting the care they need when they need it. This will be a tremendous tool in making sure that we are not allowing barriers for care and treatment for Texans.

Texas Medical Association President, David C. Fleeger, MD, released the following statement:

“Senate Bill 1742 will shine a bright light into the shadowy world where insurance companies grant or deny prior approvals. This will help physicians make sure that our patients get the medicines, tests, and treatments that they need.”

Associate State Director for AARP Texas, Blake Hutson, released the following statement:

"AARP Texas has advocated for protections against surprise medical bills and considers up to date and easily accessible provider directories an important part of protecting consumers. Texans need to have accurate information when they are searching for health care providers. This new law will ensure that consumers aren't saddled with unexpected, out-of-network costs as a result of incorrect information about their insurance coverage.”

State Senator José Menéndez released the following statements:

"We are very proud of this legislation because it enhances patient access to timely and appropriate care, which minimizes potential treatment disruptions, and allows physicians to keep patients in-network for elective care. It is a needed resource since it make its easier for patients to check their health plan through lawfully required online directories."

"At the end of the day it is about making sure Texans are receiving the value and quality they deserve when purchasing health insurance and seeking the care they need with more information and greater transparency," adds Menéndez.

###