

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6567

As of February 5, 2002

Title: An act relating to health care teleservices.

Brief Description: Requiring health carriers to cover health care teleservices.

Sponsors: Senators Finkbeiner and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/7/02.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: Telemedicine refers to the practice of providing health care services long-distance through electronic means. Advances in telecommunications technology have made telemedicine a common practice in this state, especially in the service of rural residents who may not have convenient in-person access to health care specialists. There is concern, however, that its more widespread use could be discouraged by insurance carriers that are unwilling to reimburse providers for telemedicine services to the same extent as they will for services provided in-person.

Summary of Bill: A health carrier may not discriminate against the use of health care teleservices by health care providers to provide covered health care services to enrollees. However, a carrier may restrict enrollees to obtaining covered services only from health care practitioners who have signed participating provider agreements, and may use other managed care and cost-containment techniques.

"Health care teleservices" means the use of any information technology to deliver or assist in the delivery of health care services and information from one location to another.

The Insurance Commissioner may adopt rules to implement the act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2003.