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§19-222.

(a) (1) A facility may not change any rate schedule or charge of any type or class defined under § 19-220(b) of this subtitle, unless the facility files with the Commission a written notice of the proposed change that is supported by any information that the facility considers appropriate.

(2) Unless the Commission orders otherwise in conformity to this section, a change in the rate schedule or charge is effective on the date that the notice specifies. That effective date shall be at least 30 days after the date on which the notice is filed.

(b) (1) Commission review of a proposed change may not exceed 150 days after the notice is filed.

(2) The Commission may hold a public hearing to consider the notice.

(3) If the Commission decides to hold a public hearing, the Commission:

(i) Within 65 days after the filing of the notice, shall set a place and date for the hearing; and

(ii) May suspend the effective date of any proposed change until 30 days after conclusion of the hearing.

(4) If the Commission suspends the effective date of a proposed change, the Commission shall give the facility a written statement of the reasons for the suspension.

(5) The Commission:

(i) May conduct the public hearing without complying with formal rules of evidence; and

(ii) Shall allow any interested party to introduce evidence that relates to the proposed change, including testimony by witnesses.

(c) (1) The Commission may permit a facility to change any rate or charge temporarily, if the Commission considers it to be in the public interest.

(2) An approved temporary change becomes effective immediately on filing.

(3) Under the review procedures of this section, the Commission promptly shall consider the reasonableness of the temporary change.

(d) If the Commission modifies a proposed change or approves only part of a

proposed change, a facility, without losing its right to appeal the part of the Commission order that denies full approval of the proposed change, may:

- (1) Charge its patients according to the decision of the Commission; and
- (2) Accept any benefits under that decision.

(e) If a change in any rate or charge increase becomes effective because a final determination is delayed because of an appeal or otherwise, the Commission may order the facility:

- (1) To keep a detailed and accurate account of:
 - (i) Funds received because of the change; and
 - (ii) The persons from whom these funds were collected; and
- (2) As to any funds received because of a change that later is held excessive or unreasonable:
 - (i) To refund the funds with interest; or
 - (ii) If a refund of the funds is impracticable, to charge over and amortize the funds through a temporary decrease in charges or rates.

(f) A decision by the Commission on any contested change under this section shall comply with the Administrative Procedure Act and shall be only prospective in effect.

(g) (1) The State Health Services Cost Review Commission shall provide incentives for merger, consolidation, and conversion and for the implementation of the institution-specific plan developed in accordance with § 19-119 of this title.

(2) Notwithstanding any of the provisions in this section, on notification of a merger or consolidation by 2 or more hospitals, the Commission shall review the rates of those hospitals that are directly involved in the merger or consolidation in accordance with the rate review and approval procedures provided in § 19-220 of this subtitle and the regulations of the Commission.

(3) The Commission may provide, as appropriate, for temporary adjustment of the rates of those hospitals that are directly involved in the merger or consolidation, closure, or delicensure in order to provide sufficient funds for an orderly transition. These funds may include:

- (i) Allowances for those employees who are or would be displaced;
- (ii) Allowances to permit a surviving institution in a merger to generate capital to convert a closed facility to an alternate use;

(iii) Any other closure costs as defined in § 10–340 of the Economic Development Article; or

(iv) Agreements to allow retention of a portion of the savings that result for a designated period of time.

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