

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 851 (Delegate George)
Health and Government Operations

Health Insurance - Biometric Health Care Identification Cards

This bill requires an insurer, nonprofit health service plan, or health maintenance organization (collectively known as a carrier) that provides a health insurance benefit card to enrollees to allow an enrollee to upgrade to a biometric health care identification card that can securely validate the identity and access the medical history of the enrollee through use of a “biometric identifier.” A carrier may establish a fee for a biometric identification card.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect governmental operations or finances.

Local Effect: To the extent enrollees elect to upgrade to biometric health care identification cards, local health departments must obtain the hardware and software necessary to read the cards and access the medical history of the enrollee.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful. To the extent enrollees elect to upgrade to biometric health care identification cards, health care providers must obtain the hardware and software necessary to read the cards and access the medical history of the enrollee.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Biometric identifier” means a distinctive and measurable physiological characteristic that may be used to label and describe individuals, including fingerprints, an image that would allow application of face or iris recognition technology, DNA, and a palm print.

Current Law: Section 15-130 of the Insurance Article requires carriers that provide coverage for prescription drugs on an outpatient basis and Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) to provide insureds, subscribers, or enrollees with a health insurance benefit card, prescription benefit card, or other technology that (1) complies with the standards set forth in the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs Pharmacy ID Card Implementation Guide or (2) includes specified data elements. The health insurance benefit card, prescription benefit card, or other technology must be issued to each insured, subscriber, or enrollee and reissued as necessary. A carrier or MCO may issue a health insurance benefit card that contains data elements related to both prescription and nonprescription health insurance benefits.

Background: According to the California Healthcare Foundation, the use of biometric authentication in health care is relatively new. Some examples of current use include biometric patient check-in at hospitals via palm screening, fingerprint scanning to identify blood bank donors, authentication of health care workers authorized to access electronic health record systems, and authentication of patients at the point of service to reduce medical claims fraud.

Additional Comments: CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield advises that implementation of the bill would entail significant costs to carriers that would be passed on to enrollees.

SB 387/HB 1120 of 2014 would require the Motor Vehicle Administration to provide a driver's license, identification, or moped operator's permit applicant who shows acceptable proof of identity, State residence, and U.S. citizenship the opportunity to upgrade the document to an enhanced identification document. An enhanced identification document must contain an embedded memory and microprocessor chip to store one or more biometric identifiers.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): California Healthcare Foundation; CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Insurance Administration, Department of Legislative Services

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