

# SB 1135 (Monning): Consumers Deserve to Know Their Rights to Timely Access to Care

California law gives consumers the right to timely access to care and care in their preferred language. However, very few people know these consumer protections exist. Sponsored by Health Access, [SB 1135](#) (Monning) requires health plans and insurers to notify consumers and health care providers about patients' right to timely care and language assistance.

## Existing Consumer Rights

Under existing California law, health plans are required to provide patients with appointments within specific timeframes and arrange for interpreters and translated written materials when requested by the patient. These laws state:

### *Consumers have a right to timely access to care.*

Existing law gives consumers the right to appointments within the following time frames, and health plans and insurers must have enough doctors and other providers in their network to provide timely access to care:

Urgent Appointments	Wait Time
for services that don't need prior approval	48 hours
for services that do need prior approval	96 hours
Non-Urgent Appointments	Wait Time
Primary care appointment	10 business days
Specialist appointment	15 business days
Appointment with a mental health care provider (who is not a physician)	10 business days
Appointment for other services to diagnose or treat a health condition	15 business days

*Consumers have a right to language assistance*, including Interpreter services at the time of the appointment at no cost to the patient. No consumer should ever face the choice of a timely appointment or care in the language spoken and California law requires access to an interpreter without affecting timely access to care.

## Proposed Legislation: Give Consumers Notice about their Rights

Few consumers know that they have a right to timely access to care and care in the language they speak. In SB 1135 (Monning), health plans and insurers are required to:

**Notify patients of their right to timely access and language access** through existing documents and communication channels, such as:

- Evidence of Coverage documents
- Wherever information on language assistance is provided, as required by existing law
- Provider directories
- Health plan and insurer websites
- Annual enrollment or renewal notices

### **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.

*For more information about this legislation, please contact Tam Ma, Health Access California, at [tma@health-access.org](mailto:tma@health-access.org) or 916-497-0923 x. 201.*