

PRESS RELEASE

Friday, August 26, 2016

HIGH-PROFILE LEGISLATION TO PREVENT SURPRISE MEDICAL BILLS UP FOR SENATE VOTE MONDAY

- *Bipartisan Solution on Surprise Medical Bills Likely Up For Final Senate Floor Vote Monday; Must Pass Senate and then Assembly by Legislative Deadline of Wednesday, August 31st.*
- *AB 72 (Bonta, Bonilla, Dahle, Gonzalez, Maienschein, Santiago, and Wood) Seeks to End Logjam from Last Year's AB 533 Which Stalled by Only Three Votes on Last Night of Session. Joint Authors Include Leaders of Both Parties & Four Who Didn't Support AB533 Last Year.*
- *Legislation Has the Some of the Strongest Consumer Protections Against Surprise Medical Bills in the Nation, to Prevent Californians Who Go to In-Network Hospitals/Facilities From Getting Out-of-Network Bills of Hundreds or Thousands of Dollars.*

SACRAMENTO, CA—Facing an end of session deadline, consumer advocates and legislators are working hard to ensure passage of a bill to protect consumers from unexpected medical charges. AB 72 (Bonta, et. al.), co-sponsored by Health Access California and the California Labor Federation, is eligible to be taken up on the Senate Floor as early as Monday.

"A medical procedure should not turn into financial catastrophe because of a surprise medical bill, especially when patients follow the rules of their plan and go to an in-network facility," said Anthony Wright, executive director for Health Access California, the California's health consumer advocacy coalition. "AB 72 takes patients out of the middle of payment disputes between doctors and insurers and makes it clear that patients who go to in-network hospitals would only be responsible for in-network cost sharing for all the care they receive."

[AB 72 \(Bonta, Bonilla, Dahle, Gonzalez, Maienschein, Santiago, and Wood\)](#) is the result of months of negotiations among lawmakers, advocates, providers and insurers. Recent negotiations ensure that many organizations that were opposed last year, such as the California Medical Association, are now neutral on the bill. The logjam on the legislation has been the compensation rate for providers, which is higher in AB 72 than in AB 533, the previous iteration of the bill. In addition, the revised legislation includes even stronger consumer protections. AB 533 was headed to the Governor's desk when it stalled by just three votes on the final night of the legislative session last year.



"We can't let this important patient protection face another end-of-session logjam, and have California consumers face these unfair surprise medical bills for another year. These surprise bills are not just unjust, but destabilizing for family finances, and need to be stopped yesterday," continued Wright. "The California Legislature has the opportunity at the end of this session to end surprise bills, with some of the strongest consumer protections in the nation."

Reference materials:

[AB 72 fact sheet](#)

[Surprise medical bills consumer stories](#)

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About Health Access California

Health Access California is the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition, advocating for the goal of quality, affordable health care for all Californians. We represent consumers in the legislature, at administrative and regulatory agencies, in the media, and at public forums. For more information, please visit www.health-access.org.

