

HCS SB 635 -- HEALTH CARE

SPONSOR: Hegeman (Cornejo)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Health and Mental Health Policy by a vote of 9 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill creates the "Missouri Palliative Care and Quality of Life Interdisciplinary Council," to consult with and advise the Department of Health and Senior Services on matters related to the establishment, maintenance, operation, and outcomes evaluation of palliative care initiatives in the state, as well as submit an annual report to the General Assembly assessing the availability of palliative care in the state for patients at early stages of serious disease and analyzing barriers with greater access to palliative care. The bill also creates the "Palliative Care Consumer and Professional Information and Education Program," which must be designed to maximize the effectiveness of palliative care in the state by ensuring the public availability of comprehensive and accurate information about palliative care. The program is required to encourage hospitals to have a palliative care presence on their intranet or Internet website and to develop and distribute information about palliative care to patients. These provisions of the bill expire on August 28, 2022.

The bill establishes this state as a member of a compact to facilitate the interstate practice of physical therapy. The primary purpose of the compact is to preserve the regulatory authority of states to protect public health and safety through the current system of state licensure. The compact will become effective after it has been approved by 10 member states. The bill outlines specific requirements that a state must complete in order to participate in the compact and that a licensee must adhere to in order to exercise privileges thereunder.

The bill adds services rendered by licensed occupational therapists to services that cannot require a higher co-payment or coinsurance than is required for the services of a primary care physician office visit. The bill requires health carriers to clearly state the availability of occupational therapy services and requires the Oversight Division of the Joint Committee on Legislative Research to perform an actuarial analysis of the cost impact health carriers, insureds, and other payers for occupational therapy coverage beginning September 1, 2016, and submit a report by December 31, 2016.

This bill is similar to HB 2328 (2016) and SCS HB 808 (2015).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that there are persistent gaps in care for individuals near the end of their life that require urgent attention from numerous stakeholder groups. Every medical organization now recognizes that management of illness includes early management, not just at end of life. Palliative care improves the quality of life for patients and families of patients who are experiencing pain and other symptoms and side effects associated with chronic disease. The Missouri Palliative Care and Quality of Life Interdisciplinary Council can help to answer important questions, including how effective current policies and procedures are and what is required to better serve patients' needs.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Hegeman; American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network; Missouri Academy Of Family Physicians; BJC Health Care Systems; Missouri Hospital Association; and SSM Health Care.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.