

## PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, August 18, 2016

### BILL TO REQUIRE DISCLOSURE OF KEY PATIENTS RIGHTS PASSES CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY

- *SB 1135 (Monning) is Part of a Health Access-Sponsored Package of Bills Aimed at Protecting Patients' Rights Moving Through the Legislature.*
- *Existing Law Requires Health Plans and Insurers to Provide Appointments in Specified Times Frames and in a Language the Patient Can Understand; SB 1135 Empowers Consumers by Ensuring That They Know Their Rights.*
- *The Bill Heads Back to the Senate for a Concurrence Vote.*

SACRAMENTO, CA – Today, the California State Assembly passed SB 1135 (Monning), which informs consumers of their right to timely access to care and a medical interpreter, on a bipartisan 47-17 vote. SB 1135 is one of a package of key patient' rights bills sponsored by Health Access California that are currently moving through the legislature.

"California law is clear - timely access to care in a language you can understand is a basic right. Consumers are less clear about what their rights are. SB 1135 empowers consumers by making sure they know if and when their health needs are being met in accordance with the law," said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, the statewide health consumer advocacy coalition. "Having insurance alone does not equal access to care. Patients need to know what they can elect and demand of their health care system."

Existing California law requires health care providers to follow timely access to care and right to translator rules. The right to timely access was originally part of California's Knox-Keene Act and over the years additional laws to clarify and enforce timely access requirements have been implemented. However, consumers are often not aware of these laws or their statutory rights when they attempt to access care. A secret shopper survey in 2015 found that, on average, newly insured (under Covered California and Medi-Cal) patients seeking primary care were able to secure an appointment abiding to existing timely access regulations less than 30% of the time.

"These unnecessary barriers compound the anxiety that comes with needing medical care in the first place," continued Wright. "Being able to see a doctor when needed and understand medical treatment in the language you understand are core tenants of California's health care system."

SB 1135 requires notifications of timely access and language assistance to be provided when someone first enrolls in a health plan, including Medi-Cal plans, and when they renew each year. The information would also be provided in the Evidence of Coverage and in a health plan's provider directory and internet website.

The bill now heads to the Senate for a concurrence vote. All bills must be passed off the legislative floor by midnight on August 31st.

Reference materials:

[SB 1135 Fact Sheet](#)

Blog Post: [Knowledge is Power: Consumers Deserve to Know Their Rights to Timely Access to Care & Language Assistance](#)

###

*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](http://www.health-access.org).*

