



CENTER *for* HEALTH LAW
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THE CENTER FOR HEALTH LAW AND POLICY INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTS POLICIES THAT WOULD STRENGTHEN BALANCE BILLING PROTECTIONS IN MISSISSIPPI

(Cambridge, Massachusetts – March 11, 2019) The Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School announces the release of [*Unfinished Business: Bolstering Balance Billing Protections in Mississippi*](#). The report provides an overview of Mississippi’s current law prohibiting “balance billing” and offers policy solutions that would strengthen enforcement mechanisms and protect Mississippi consumers from medical debt.

Mississippi health care providers are prohibited by law from billing patients after accepting payment from their insurance companies. However, some providers have continued balance billing and have surprised patients with thousands of dollars in unforeseen medical bills. “Patients don’t expect to get these medical bills,” said Roy Mitchell, Executive Director of Mississippi Health Advocacy Program. “Providers aren’t allowed to send these bills if they already accepted payment from the insurer, but no one is making sure they comply with the law. Unfortunately, our collective trust of the provider community is being abused to the detriment of our bank accounts. It is time our policymakers even the playing field for Mississippi’s health consumers.”

Unfinished Business: Bolstering Balance Billing Protections in Mississippi highlights steps the legislature can take to improve compliance with Mississippi’s existing law and incorporate best practices that have emerged since the state first prohibited balance billing in 2013. The report includes examples of how states like Texas and Florida have addressed balance billing and saved their residents millions of dollars.

Robert Greenwald, Faculty Director of the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School, said, “*Unfinished Business* is a tool for state legislators and consumer advocates. Mississippi’s law needs to be strengthened so state officials can effectively enforce existing law and protect patients from illegal balance billing.”

Mississippi voters overwhelmingly support practical solutions to this issue. A poll conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy in January 2019 found that 85% of interviewed voters supported a state law that would protect patients by requiring health care providers and insurance companies to resolve payment disputes between themselves. Additionally, 82% supported explicitly giving the state Attorney General authority to investigate complaints and enforce Mississippi’s balance billing law.

Despite voter support for meaningful policy, Mississippi legislators have failed to pass legislation that would strengthen existing law. Health care providers, insurers, small businesses, and consumer advocates have worked together in at least 25 states to find solutions that protect patients and families. Maryanne Tomazic, Clinical Fellow at the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, explained, “Other states are using best practices that not only protect consumers, but also ensure that reasonable payments are made between insurers and health care providers.”

For more information about the report, visit https://www.chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Balance-Billing-Report_Final.pdf.

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