

Rep. Loudenbeck: Innovating health care bills pass assembly

Posted on Thursday, Jan 20, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Madison- Today, the Wisconsin State Assembly passed two innovative health care bills authored by Rep. Amy Loudenbeck (R-Clinton) and Sen. Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield).

“Now more than ever, technology and innovation have proven to be a vital lifeline Wisconsinites seeking quality health care options that meet their needs. The bills we passed today build on the framework of a telehealth bill Senator Kooyenga and I passed last session and extend Medicaid eligibility for hospital level care provided in a patient’s home. Delivering the right care, at the right time, in the right place is a good goal for policymakers and health care providers alike; COVID has really underscored how important it is for us to work together to advance new and forward thinking ideas,” said Loudenbeck.

“Far too often government impedes innovations that have the potential to lower costs and expand access to quality care. These bills continue the progress we made last session by allowing more flexibility in how and where health care can be delivered, both of which are needed now more than ever. Thank you to Rep. Loudenbeck for being a partner on these important bills and for her commitment to innovative health care reforms,” said Kooyenga.

Senate Bill 309, is a technical bill that is needed to provide clarity and uniformity to the definitions of “Free and Charitable Clinics” and “Telehealth” in Wisconsin Statutes.

Free and Charitable Clinics (FCCs) are safety-net health care organizations that utilize a volunteer/staff model to provide a range of medical, dental, pharmacy, vision and/or behavioral health services to economically disadvantaged individuals.

FCCs have existed in Wisconsin for over 25 years and have provided care to thousands of patients with limited government funding. 2019 Wisconsin Act 9 contained language directing DHS to provide \$500,000 to FCCs in Wisconsin. In awarding the funding, it was discovered the term “Free and Charitable Clinics” is not defined in statute, which could cause ambiguity in the future. SB 309 corrects this issue by including clear language related to the appropriation and creating a definition for “Free and Charitable Clinics”.

Additionally, SB 309 incorporates the current definition of “telehealth” that is already recognized in the Medicaid program into Chapter 440 of Wisconsin statutes, which governs regulation of and occupational licensing for medical professionals. The bill also requires the Department of Safety and Professional Services and any attached examining board or affiliated credentialing board to define and use “telehealth” and related terms consistent with this bill in all promulgated rules. As we continue to develop state laws and policies to keep pace with advances in technology and care delivery innovations, it’s important to make sure that definitions are clear and consistent across Wisconsin’s statutes.

SB 309 has passed both chambers and heads to the governor for final action.

Assembly Bill 679, removes the sunset provision created in 2021 Wisconsin Act 10, which was the Covid relief bill, to allow hospitals to seek federal Medicare reimbursement for certain services provided in a home setting. Current law sunsets the program on January 1, 2022.

Over the last several sessions, the Legislature has worked with stakeholders from across the health care industry to improve access to quality healthcare by increasing opportunities for innovative and cost effective programs. By allowing this innovative program to continue, these regulatory flexibilities will create additional capacity options and allow hospitals to provide a high quality of care in a patient’s home prior to discharge from an inpatient service.

AB 679 is available for scheduling in the Senate.