
Detailed Fiscal Analysis

The bill requires certain elements of a patient's medical record to be authenticated and permits this to be done through a handwritten signature or initials. The bill also allows the use of an electronic or computer-generated signature to authenticate a document providing certain conditions are met. According to a spokesperson from OHA: The Association for Hospitals and Health Systems, this practice is currently permitted in standards set forth by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and is generally in use at computerized facilities. Additionally, although the language requires an authenticating signature, it is permissive as to whether this is handwritten, electronic or computer-generated. There is no enforcement provision in the bill. Overall, no fiscal effect is expected from these provisions.

The bill also requires the Public Health Council to establish and adopt protocols for the use of electronic and computer-generated signatures, as well as to certify a facility's signature code system if it complies with the adopted protocol or by the JCAHO. These provisions are expected to increase expenditures minimally for the Department of Health.

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