

According to a spokesperson from OHA: The Association for Hospitals and Health Systems, the practice of using electronic signatures is currently permitted in standards set forth by HCFA and 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 a handwritten, electronic or computer-generated signature. Since this practice is generally in use and certification can be accepted from numerous organizations, it is assumed that these provisions, overall, will have a minimal fiscal effect.

The bill also requires the Public Health Council to adopt rules for the department to certify if an entity's electronic signature system complies with the standards set forth in the bill. This provision is expected to be a minimal one-time increase in expenditure for the Department of Health.

Health Care Facility Licensure

Additionally, under law, the Director of Health has been required to issue a license to a health care facility that files an application and demonstrates that certain quality standards have been met. An exception was granted to those facilities located in rural areas that apply on or after March 31, 1996 and at the time the license is to take effect, the quality standards are not yet in effect. Under those circumstances, the director must grant the license without a demonstration that the facility meets those standards. Additionally, effective March 21, 1996, none of these facilities were able to operate without a license and effective April 1, 1998, no other facility could operate without a license.

Amended Sub. H.B. 215, as enacted, inadvertently eliminated the licensure requirement for rural health care facilities, which effectively allowed them to operate without licensure or adherence to quality standards. This bill's provisions restore the licensure requirement and is not expected to have a fiscal effect.

Other Provisions

Current law requires an applicant to practice nursing as a clinical nurse specialist to have at least a master's degree with a major in a nursing specialty or related field. The bill requires this applicant to have at least a master's degree with a major in a clinical area of nursing or to have at least a master's degree in nursing or a related field and is to be certified as a clinical nurse specialist.

The bill also designates the month of October as "Ohio Breast Cancer Awareness Month". Additionally, the third Thursday of this month is designated "Ohio Mammography Day" to promote the importance of identifying breast cancer in its earliest stages.

Overall, these provisions are not expected to have a fiscal effect.

□ *LBO staff: Jeffrey M. Rosa, Budget/Policy Analyst*

H:\FN122\hb0243sp.doc