

Date of Hearing: June 2, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 2520 (Chiu) – As Amended May 20, 2020

Policy Committee: Health Vote: 15 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill changes several provisions of law to facilitate the ability of a patient or their representative to receive medical records and forms needed to apply for public benefit programs. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Entitles an employee of a nonprofit legal services entity representing a patient to provide a copy, at no charge, of the relevant portion of a patient's records that are needed to support a claim regarding eligibility for specified public benefit programs.
- 2) Requires a health care provider to provide the records at no charge to the entity upon proof that the records are needed for a petition for specified violence prevention programs.
- 3) Prohibits a health care provider from charging a fee to a patient for filling out forms or providing information responsive to forms that support a claim or appeal regarding eligibility for a public benefit program.

FISCAL EFFECT:

To the extent this bill facilitates the enrollment in or the provision of public services to individuals attempting to access publicly funded state benefit programs, there could be indeterminate, minor costs across a range of state-funded programs.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, some health care providers refuse to complete forms or charge a minimum of \$40 to complete them. This creates a barrier to accessing critical benefit programs. This bill will allow patients to access necessary records and would allow legal services representatives to assist in obtaining records. This bill is sponsored by Western Center on Law and Poverty and supported by consumer and health care advocates.
- 2) **Background.** Many state and federal public benefit programs require medical certification. For instance, certain health care programs require a verification of medical diagnosis. Existing law entitles a patient or the representative of a patient to a copy, at no charge, of the relevant portion of the patient's records, upon presenting to the provider proof that the records are needed to support an appeal regarding eligibility for certain public benefit programs. This bill would entitle a patient to a free copy of their records for purposes of establishing eligibility for an expanded list of programs and make other changes to facilitate a patient's access to records.

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