



THE MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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**Rep. Kate Hogan re-files bill to protect access to confidential health care**

(BOSTON) – Representative Kate Hogan has introduced 17 bills in the 190<sup>th</sup> legislative session ranging in topic from enhancing support for seniors, to easing the burden of agriculture estate taxes, to ensuring access to safe, affordable health care. For the second session in a row, Rep. Hogan is sponsoring HD3059, “An Act to protect access to confidential healthcare,” a bill that aims to protect patient privacy.

Currently, when a patient accesses health care services in Massachusetts, a form called an explanation of benefits (EOB) – that details the type and cost of services received – is typically sent to the primary policyholder of the health plan, not the patient. Sensitive health information is frequently disclosed in an EOB, violating the basic right to privacy for anyone enrolled as a dependent on another’s policy. Lack of confidentiality negatively affects everyone, but especially adult spouses covered as dependents on a partner’s plan - particularly when a partner is abusive or coercive - and young adults, between the ages of 18 and 26, who are insured on their parents’ plan.

To ensure confidential information is not shared when multiple people are on the same insurance plan, the PATCH Act will allow patients to choose their own preferred method of receiving EOBs, including at an alternate address or through HIPAA-compliant electronic means. In addition, the legislation will ensure that the Division of Insurance and the Department of Public Health educate providers and patients on these protections.

“Maintaining confidentiality is particularly important for patients seeking certain sensitive services, such as care related to sexual and reproductive health, domestic violence or sexual assault, and mental health and substance use disorders,” said Representative Kate Hogan. “There are situations where a patient fears disclosure to an abusive partner or family member, or the discovery of received services by a parent, which may deter them from seeking care altogether. Failure to obtain care has serious consequences, such as unplanned pregnancies, delayed access to prenatal care, the spread of STDs, deteriorating mental health conditions, and continued substance abuse.”

Rep. Hogan and Senator Karen Spilka - the senate sponsor - previously filed this bill in the 189<sup>th</sup> legislative session, when it was engrossed in the Senate. A coalition of close to 40 organizations endorsed this legislation, including the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts, and ACLU of Massachusetts. Rep. Hogan and Sen. Spilka look forward to working with their colleagues this session to pass the bill into law.