
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 453 Session of
2013

INTRODUCED BY COSTA, YUDICHAK, FONTANA, RAFFERTY, FERLO, BROWNE,
SOLOBAY, BLAKE, FARNESE AND SMITH, FEBRUARY 8, 2013

REFERRED TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE, FEBRUARY 8, 2013

AN ACT

1 Providing for patients' rights; and establishing a Pain
2 Management and Palliative Care Task Force.

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3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 CHAPTER 1

6 PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

7 Section 101. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Patient
9 Comfort Act.

10 Section 102. Legislative intent.

11 The purpose of this act is to provide for education and
12 treatment of pain.

13 Section 103. Definitions.

14 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
15 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
16 context clearly indicates otherwise:

17 "Department." The Department of Health of the Commonwealth.

18 "Health care facility." As defined in section 103 of the act
19 of July 19, 1979 (P.L.130, No.48), known as the Health Care
20 Facilities Act.

21 "Health care provider." As defined in section 103 of the act
22 of July 19, 1979 (P.L.130, No. 48), known as the Health Care
23 Facilities Act.

24 "Task force." The Pain Management and Palliative Care Task
25 Force established under Chapter 5.

26 CHAPTER 3

27 PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

28 Section 301. Rights.

29 Patients in health care facilities have the following rights:

30 (1) To be informed of all evidence-based options for

1 care and treatment, including palliative care, in order to
2 make a fully informed decision.

3 (2) When diagnosed with a terminal illness, to be
4 informed by a clinician of all available options related to
5 terminal care; to be able to request any, all or none of
6 these options; and to expect and receive supportive care for
7 the specific option or options available.

8 (3) To request or reject the use of any or all
9 treatments in order to relieve pain.

10 (4) To receive competent and compassionate medical
11 assistance in managing physical and emotional symptoms.

12 (5) While suffering from a serious or life-limiting
13 illness or condition, to receive palliative care while
14 seeking and undergoing potentially curative treatment.

15 (6) To receive a reasonable answer to any specific
16 question about a diagnosis, prognosis or foreseeable risks
17 and benefits of a treatment option. A medical practitioner
18 shall not withhold any requested information except to the
19 extent that a reasonable medical practitioner would withhold
20 the information because the manner and extent of such
21 disclosure could reasonably be expected to adversely and
22 substantially affect the patient's condition, in which case
23 the medical practitioner shall provide the information to a
24 member of the patient's immediate family.

25 (7) To know by name the medical practitioner primarily
26 responsible for coordinating care.

27 Section 302. Notification of rights.

28 The department shall notify all health care facilities and
29 health care providers in writing of the enactment of this
30 chapter. The notification shall contain the actual language of

1 the patients' bill of rights and any relevant guidance.

2 CHAPTER 5

3 EDUCATION AND TREATMENT

4 Section 501. Establishment of task force.

5 The Pain Management and Palliative Care Task Force is
6 established in the department.

7 Section 502. Composition of task force.

8 The Secretary of Health or a designee shall serve as
9 chairperson of the task force. The members of the task force,
10 which the Secretary of Health shall be responsible for
11 appointing, shall be as follows:

12 (1) At least two of the members must be medical
13 practitioners specializing in pain management.

14 (2) At least two of the members must be medical
15 practitioners specializing in the care of the terminally ill.

16 (3) At least one of the members must be a medical
17 practitioner specializing in pediatric palliative care.

18 (4) At least two of the members must be faculty members
19 of a State-sponsored medical school.

20 (5) At least one of the members must be a representative
21 from the department.

22 Section 503. Meetings of task force.

23 The task force shall convene within 90 days after the
24 appointments are made and published and shall meet at the
25 discretion of the chairperson.

26 Section 504. Compensation and expenses of task force members.

27 The members of the task force shall receive no compensation
28 for their services but shall be allowed their actual and
29 necessary expenses incurred in performance of their duties. Such
30 reimbursement shall be provided through the department.

1 Section 505. Duties of task force.

2 The task force shall have the following duties:

3 (1) To develop, using existing resources, a plan to
4 raise public awareness of the importance of pain management
5 and palliative care and the patients' bill of rights.

6 (2) To facilitate coordination of and communication
7 among State and local agencies and organizations to promote
8 palliative and pain management initiatives in this
9 Commonwealth.

10 (3) To research and develop a plan to ensure the
11 availability of concurrent care for pediatric patients facing
12 life-threatening illnesses.

13 (4) To research and develop a plan to ensure the
14 availability of palliative care in all hospitals in this
15 Commonwealth.

16 (5) To research and develop a plan which would ensure
17 that all State-supported medical schools have affiliations
18 with hospital palliative care programs.

19 Section 506. Report of task force.

20 On or before November 30, 2014, the task force shall present
21 a report to the chairman of the Public Health and Welfare
22 Committee of the Senate and the chairman of the Health and Human
23 Services Committee of the House of Representatives. The report
24 shall present findings on and recommendations for the subjects
25 assigned to the task force under section 505.

26 CHAPTER 11

27 MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

28 Section 1101. Effect on legal actions.

29 Nothing in Chapter 3 or 5 creates a cause of action or
30 defense in favor of any person arising out of the failure to

- 1 comply with either of these chapters.
- 2 Section 1102. Effective date.
- 3 This act shall take effect in 60 days.