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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- CONFIDENTIALITY OF HEALTH  
CARE COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ACT

Introduced By: Senators Goldin, Valverde, DiMario, Mendes, and Miller

Date Introduced: January 19, 2021

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 5-37.3 of the General Laws entitled "Confidentiality of Health Care  
2 Communications and Information Act" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **5-37.3-12. Right to confidential communication of medical information.**

4 (a) As used in this section:

5 (1) "Confidential communications request" means a request by an insured covered under a  
6 health insurance policy that insurance communications containing medical information be  
7 communicated to him or her at a specific mail or email address or specific telephone number, as  
8 designated by the insured.

9 (2) "Health insurer" shall have the same meaning as "managed-care entity" as defined in §  
10 5-37.3-3

11 (3) "Health care provider" shall have the same meaning as set forth in § 5-37.3-3.

12 (4) "Medical information" means any individually identifiable information, in electronic  
13 or physical form, in possession of or derived from a health care provider, health insurer,  
14 pharmaceutical company, or contractor regarding a patient's medical history, mental or physical  
15 condition, or treatment. "Individually identifiable" means that the medical information includes or  
16 contains any element of personal identifying information sufficient to allow identification of the  
17 individual, such as the patient's name, address, electronic mail address, telephone number, or social  
18 security number, or other information that, alone or in combination with other publicly available

1 information, reveals the individual's identity.

2 (b) Notwithstanding any other law, and to the extent permitted by federal law, a health  
3 insurer shall take the following steps to protect the confidentiality of an insured's medical  
4 information on and after January 1, 2022:

5 (1) A health insurer shall permit an insured to submit a confidential communications  
6 request form as described in subsection (e) of this section. A health insurer shall accommodate  
7 requests for communication in the form and format requested by the individual, if it is readily  
8 producibile in the requested form and format. A health insurer shall permit that communications  
9 containing medical information be communicated to the insured at a specific mail or email address  
10 or specific telephone number, as designated by the insured.

11 (2) A health insurer may require the insured to make a request for a confidential  
12 communication described in subsection (b)(1) of this section, in writing or by electronic  
13 transmission.

14 (3) The confidential communication request shall be valid until the insured submits a  
15 revocation of the request, or a new confidential communication request is submitted.

16 (4) For the purposes of this section, a confidential communications request must be  
17 implemented by the health insurer within seven (7) calendar days of the receipt of an electronic  
18 transmission or telephonic request or within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt by first-class  
19 mail. The health insurer shall acknowledge receipt of the confidential communications request and  
20 advise the insured of the status of implementation of the request if an insured contacts the insurer.

21 (c) Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, a health care provider may make  
22 arrangements with the insured for the payment of benefit cost sharing and communicate that  
23 arrangement with the insurer.

24 (d) A health insurer shall not condition coverage on the waiver of rights provided in this  
25 section.

26 (e) All health insurers shall create a confidential communications request form that shall  
27 be easily readable and prominently displayed on the health insurer's website.

28 (f) The department of health shall develop and disseminate to health care providers  
29 information on best practices relating to how providers can support patients requesting confidential  
30 communications including, but not limited to:

31 (1) Ensuring that health care providers and health care staff are aware and understand the  
32 requirements outlined in this section;

33 (2) Having hard-copy versions of the standardized confidential communications request  
34 forms described in subsection (e) of this section, prominently displayed and available to patients;

1 and

2 (3) Offering to submit the standardized confidential communications request forms  
3 described in subsection (e) of this section that has been completed by a patient to that patient's  
4 health insurer.

5 (g) The office of the health insurance commissioner and the department of health may  
6 adopt reasonable rules and regulations for the implementation and administration of this chapter.

7 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

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1           This act would require a health insurer to accommodate the request for communication in  
2 the form and format requested by the insured, if it is readily producible in the requested form and  
3 format, including to provide such medical information to a specific mail or email address or specific  
4 telephone number, as designated by the insured.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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