

Florida Medical Association Thanks Governor Crist for Improving Access to Care & Honoring Patient Choice by Signing SB 1122 Into Law

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. June 10, 2009 – Today, Governor Charlie Crist signed Senate Bill 1122 into law, signaling to citizens across Florida his continued commitment to honoring patient choice and improving efficiency and access to care.”

“On behalf of the physicians who provide care to the patients of Florida, we thank Governor Crist for his demonstrated commitment to putting patients first and signing SB 1122 into law,” said Steven R. West, MD, President of the Florida Medical Association (FMA).

SB 1122 requires insurance companies to honor a patient’s request to send the payment for services directly to the physician rather than routing the payment through the patient. Currently in Florida, if a patient goes out-of-network to see a physician, some insurance companies choose to not honor the patient’s request to send the payment to the physician and instead send the check directly to the patient.

“While routing the payment through the patient may seem like a minor inconvenience, unfortunately, this practice is driving up the cost of health care, imposing hidden fees and limiting access,” said Timothy J. Stapleton, FMA Executive Vice President. “This common sense legislation will put a stop to this and allow physicians to spend more time and resources on direct-patient care.”

“We also want to acknowledge the leadership of Senator Don Gaetz and Representative Marcelo Llorente who sponsored this pro-consumer, pro-patient legislation,” added Stapleton. “They recognized that this legislation would greatly improve health care in the State of Florida.”

SB 1122 was passed by the Legislature with overwhelming support - a vote of 102-11 in the House and 31-7 in the Senate. Additionally, support of this bill has also been expressed in hundreds of letters and emails from patients and physicians across our state, as well as more than fifty national, state and local medical societies and organizations.