



# Senate

General Assembly

**File No. 8**

January Session, 2025

Substitute Senate Bill No. 1192

*Senate, February 25, 2025*

The Committee on Public Health reported through SEN. ANWAR of the 3rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## ***AN ACT CONCERNING HOSPITAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1       Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section, (1)  
2       "hospital" has the same meaning as provided in section 19a-490 of the  
3       general statutes; and (2) "hospital financial assistance" means any  
4       program administered by a hospital that reduces, in whole or in part, a  
5       patient's liability for the cost of providing services, as defined in section  
6       19a-673 of the general statutes.

7       (b) The Office of the Healthcare Advocate shall, within available  
8       appropriations, contract with a vendor to develop an online hospital  
9       financial assistance portal for use by patients and family members. Such  
10      portal shall serve as a navigation tool to help patients and family  
11      members identify and apply for hospital financial assistance at hospitals  
12      in the state. The portal may include, but need not be limited to, (1)  
13      technical assistance and tools that streamline the application process for  
14      hospital financial assistance, (2) a screening tool to help determine  
15      whether patients may be eligible for hospital financial assistance, and

16 (3) information to assist patients and family members in avoiding future  
17 medical debt.

18 (c) The Office of the Healthcare Advocate may, (1) in consultation  
19 with the Office of Policy and Management, publish on the Office of the  
20 Healthcare Advocate's Internet web site information regarding the  
21 state's medical debt erasure initiative authorized pursuant to section 48  
22 of public act 23-204, as amended by section 1 of public act 24-81, and (2)  
23 in consultation with relevant organizations, develop recommendations  
24 concerning such initiative that may assist patients and family members  
25 in avoiding future medical debt, including, but not limited to, methods  
26 to streamline the application process for hospital financial assistance.

27 (d) On and after July 1, 2026, any hospital maintaining a financial  
28 assistance program shall provide the Office of the Healthcare Advocate  
29 with the (1) links for each Internet web site for such program, and (2)  
30 telephone number and electronic mail address for the hospital's  
31 financial assistance referral contact. If a hospital revises its hospital  
32 financial assistance application form, changes its financial assistance  
33 referral contact or establishes a new hospital financial assistance  
34 program, the hospital shall notify the Office of the Healthcare Advocate  
35 of such revisions, changes or new program and provide said office with  
36 any new links for each Internet web site or the telephone number and  
37 electronic mail address of the new referral contact for such program not  
38 later than thirty days after making such revisions or changes or  
39 establishing a new program.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	July 1, 2025	New section
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**PH** Joint Favorable Subst.

*The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.*

## **OFA Fiscal Note**

### **State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 26 \$	FY 27 \$
Healthcare Advocate, Off.	IF - Cost	See Below	See Below

Note: IF=Insurance Fund

**Municipal Impact:** None

### **Explanation**

The bill results in a one-time cost to the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA) of at least \$50,000 to the Insurance Fund as it requires OHA to contract with a vendor to develop an online hospital financial assistance portal for patients and family members. The contract cost will depend on the features and functionality included in the portal. There may also be ongoing costs for portal maintenance. The bill does not specify a deadline regarding an operational portal so it is unclear in which fiscal year the initial cost will be incurred.

The bill additionally requires hospitals maintaining a financial assistance program to submit certain information to OHA, which has no fiscal impact.

### **The Out Years**

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the timing of OHA's contract with a vendor and the need for ongoing portal maintenance costs.

**OLR Bill Analysis****sSB 1192*****AN ACT CONCERNING HOSPITAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.*****SUMMARY**

This bill requires the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA), within available appropriations, to contract with a vendor to develop an online hospital financial assistance portal for patients and family members.

Under the bill, the portal must serve as a navigation tool to help patients and family members identify and apply for hospital financial assistance at Connecticut hospitals that would partially or fully reduce patients' liability for the cost of care. At a minimum, the portal may include:

1. technical assistance and tools that streamline the application process for assistance,
2. a screening tool to help determine whether patients may be eligible for assistance, and
3. information to help patients and family members avoid future medical debt.

The bill also authorizes OHA to (1) consult with the Office of Policy and Management and publish information about the state's medical debt erasure initiative on the OHA website (see BACKGROUND) and (2) develop, in consultation with relevant organizations, recommendations on the initiative that may help patients and family members avoid future medical debt, including ways to streamline the hospital financial assistance application process.

Starting July 1, 2026, hospitals that offer financial assistance programs

must give OHA contact information for their programs (i.e., website links, email addresses, and phone numbers). If a hospital revises the program's application form or contact information or establishes a new program, it must notify OHA and give the office any new program contact information within 30 days after doing so.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Medical Debt Erasure Initiative***

PA 23-204, as amended by PA 24-81, allocated \$6.5 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the state to enter a partnership with Undue Medical Debt, a national nonprofit organization. Undue Medical Debt uses these funds to negotiate with hospitals and other health care providers to eliminate large, bundled portfolios of certain medical debt.

To qualify for medical debt erasure, patients must have (1) income at or below 400% of the federal poverty level (e.g., \$84,600 for a family of two in 2025) or (2) medical debt that is at least 5% of their income. Patients do not apply for the debt relief. Instead, they are notified by Undue Medical Debt if their debt has been identified for erasure.

During the initiative's first round in December 2024, the state invested approximately \$100,000 in ARPA funds to acquire approximately \$30 million in qualifying medical debt.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 32      Nay 0      (02/10/2025)