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SENATE BILL NO. 271

Offered January 18, 2000

A BILL to amend and reenact § 2.1-20.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the state health care plan; coverage for hearing aids.

Patrons—Houck, Barry, Bolling, Byrne, Colgan, Couric, Edwards, Forbes, Hawkins, Howell, Lambert, Marye, Maxwell, Miller, Y.B., Mims, Potts, Puckett, Puller, Quayle, Reynolds, Saslaw, Ticer, Watkins and Whipple; Delegates: Amundson, Darner, Hull, Kilgore and McQuigg

Referred to Committee on Finance

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 2.1-20.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 2.1-20.1. Health and related insurance for state employees.

A. 1. The Governor shall establish a plan for providing health insurance coverage, including chiropractic treatment, hospitalization, medical, surgical and major medical coverage, for state employees and retired state employees with the Commonwealth paying the cost thereof to the extent of the coverage included in such plan. The Department of Personnel and Training shall administer this section. The plan chosen shall provide means whereby coverage for the families or dependents of state employees may be purchased. The Commonwealth may pay all or a portion of the cost thereof, and for such portion as the Commonwealth does not pay, the employee may purchase the coverage by paying the additional cost over the cost of coverage for an employee.

2. Such contribution shall be financed through appropriations provided by law.

B. The plan shall:

1. a. Include coverage for low-dose screening mammograms for determining the presence of occult breast cancer. Such coverage shall make available one screening mammogram to persons age thirty-five through thirty-nine, one such mammogram biennially to persons age forty through forty-nine, and one such mammogram annually to persons age fifty and over and may be limited to a benefit of fifty dollars per mammogram subject to such dollar limits, deductibles, and coinsurance factors as are no less favorable than for physical illness generally. The term "mammogram" shall mean an X-ray examination of the breast using equipment dedicated specifically for mammography, including but not limited to the X-ray tube, filter, compression device, screens, film, and cassettes, with an average radiation exposure of less than one rad mid-breast, two views of each breast.

b. In order to be considered a screening mammogram for which coverage shall be made available under this section:

(1) The mammogram must be (i) ordered by a health care practitioner acting within the scope of his licensure and, in the case of an enrollee of a health maintenance organization, by the health maintenance organization physician, (ii) performed by a registered technologist, (iii) interpreted by a qualified radiologist, and (iv) performed under the direction of a person licensed to practice medicine and surgery and certified by the American Board of Radiology or an equivalent examining body. A copy of the mammogram report must be sent or delivered to the health care practitioner who ordered it;

(2) The equipment used to perform the mammogram shall meet the standards set forth by the Virginia Department of Health in its radiation protection regulations; and

(3) The mammography film shall be retained by the radiologic facility performing the examination in accordance with the American College of Radiology guidelines or state law.

2. Include coverage for the treatment of breast cancer by dose-intensive chemotherapy with autologous bone marrow transplants or stem cell support when performed at a clinical program authorized to provide such therapies as a part of clinical trials sponsored by the National Cancer Institute. For persons previously covered under the plan, there shall be no denial of coverage due to the existence of a preexisting condition.

3. Include coverage for postpartum services providing inpatient care and a home visit or visits which shall be in accordance with the medical criteria outlined in the most current version of or an official update to the "Guidelines for Perinatal Care" prepared by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists or the "Standards for Obstetric-Gynecologic Services" prepared by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Such coverage shall be provided incorporating any changes in such Guidelines or Standards within six months of the publication of such Guidelines or Standards or any official amendment thereto.

4. a. Include an appeals process for resolution of written complaints concerning denials or partial denials of claims that shall provide reasonable procedures for resolution of such written complaints and

shall be published and disseminated to all covered state employees. Such appeals process shall include a separate expedited emergency appeals procedure which shall provide resolution within one business day of receipt of a complaint concerning situations requiring immediate medical care. For appeals involving adverse decisions as defined in § 32.1-137.7, the Department shall contract with one or more impartial health entities to review such decisions. Impartial health entities may include medical peer review organizations and independent utilization review companies. The Department shall adopt regulations to assure that the impartial health entity conducting the reviews has adequate standards, credentials and experience for such review. The impartial health entity shall examine the final denial of claims to determine whether the decision is objective, clinically valid, and compatible with established principles of health care. The decision of the impartial health entity shall (i) be in writing, (ii) contain findings of fact as to the material issues in the case and the basis for those findings, and (iii) be final and binding if consistent with law and policy.

b. Prior to assigning an appeal to an impartial health entity, the Department shall verify that the impartial health entity conducting the review of a denial of claims has no relationship or association with (i) the covered employee, (ii) the treating health care provider, or any of its employees or affiliates, (iii) the medical care facility at which the covered service would be provided, or any of its employees or affiliates, or (iv) the development or manufacture of the drug, device, procedure or other therapy which is the subject of the final denial of a claim. The impartial health entity shall not be a subsidiary of, nor owned or controlled by, a health plan, a trade association of health plans, or a professional association of health care providers. There shall be no liability on the part of and no cause of action shall arise against any officer or employee of an impartial health entity for any actions taken or not taken or statements made by such officer or employee in good faith in the performance of his powers and duties.

5. Include coverage for early intervention services. For purposes of this section, "early intervention services" means medically necessary speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and assistive technology services and devices for dependents from birth to age three who are certified by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services as eligible for services under Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1471 et seq.). Medically necessary early intervention services for the population certified by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services shall mean those services designed to help an individual attain or retain the capability to function age-appropriately within his environment, and shall include services which enhance functional ability without effecting a cure.

For persons previously covered under the plan, there shall be no denial of coverage due to the existence of a preexisting condition. The cost of early intervention services shall not be applied to any contractual provision limiting the total amount of coverage paid by the insurer to or on behalf of the insured during the insured's lifetime.

6. Include coverage for prescription drugs and devices approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for use as contraceptives.

7. Not deny coverage for any drug approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for use in the treatment of cancer on the basis that the drug has not been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of the specific type of cancer for which the drug has been prescribed, if the drug has been recognized as safe and effective for treatment of that specific type of cancer in one of the standard reference compendia.

8. Not deny coverage for any drug prescribed to treat a covered indication so long as the drug has been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for at least one indication and the drug is recognized for treatment of the covered indication in one of the standard reference compendia or in substantially accepted peer-reviewed medical literature.

9. Include coverage for equipment, supplies and outpatient self-management training and education, including medical nutrition therapy, for the treatment of insulin-dependent diabetes, insulin-using diabetes, gestational diabetes and noninsulin-using diabetes if prescribed by a health care professional legally authorized to prescribe such items under law. To qualify for coverage under this subdivision, diabetes outpatient self-management training and education shall be provided by a certified, registered or licensed health care professional.

10. Include coverage for reconstructive breast surgery. For purposes of this section, "reconstructive breast surgery" means surgery performed on and after July 1, 1998, (i) coincident with a mastectomy performed for breast cancer or (ii) following a mastectomy performed for breast cancer to reestablish symmetry between the two breasts. For persons previously covered under the plan, there may be no denial of coverage due to preexisting conditions.

11. Include coverage for annual pap smears, including coverage, on and after July 1, 1999, for annual testing performed by any FDA-approved gynecologic cytology screening technologies.

12. Include coverage providing a minimum stay in the hospital of not less than forty-eight hours for a patient following a radical or modified radical mastectomy and twenty-four hours of inpatient care following a total mastectomy or a partial mastectomy with lymph node dissection for treatment of breast

cancer. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed as requiring the provision of inpatient coverage where the attending physician in consultation with the patient determines that a shorter period of hospital stay is appropriate.

13. Include coverage (i) to persons age fifty and over and (ii) to persons age forty and over who are at high risk for prostate cancer, according to the most recent published guidelines of the American Cancer Society, for one PSA test in a twelve-month period and digital rectal examinations, all in accordance with American Cancer Society guidelines. For the purpose of this subdivision, "PSA testing" means the analysis of a blood sample to determine the level of prostate specific antigen.

14. Permit any individual covered under the plan direct access to the health care services of a participating specialist (i) authorized to provide services under the plan and (ii) selected by the covered individual. The plan shall have a procedure by which an individual who has an ongoing special condition may, after consultation with the primary care physician, receive a referral to a specialist for such condition who shall be responsible for and capable of providing and coordinating the individual's primary and specialty care related to the initial specialty care referral. If such an individual's care would most appropriately be coordinated by such a specialist, the plan shall refer the individual to a specialist. For the purposes of this subdivision, "special condition" means a condition or disease that is (i) life-threatening, degenerative, or disabling and (ii) requires specialized medical care over a prolonged period of time. Within the treatment period authorized by the referral, such specialist shall be permitted to treat the individual without a further referral from the individual's primary care provider and may authorize such referrals, procedures, tests, and other medical services related to the initial referral as the individual's primary care provider would otherwise be permitted to provide or authorize. The plan shall have a procedure by which an individual who has an ongoing special condition that requires ongoing care from a specialist may receive a standing referral to such specialist for the treatment of the special condition. If the primary care provider, in consultation with the plan and the specialist, if any, determines that such a standing referral is appropriate, the plan or issuer shall make such a referral to a specialist. Nothing contained herein shall prohibit the plan from requiring a participating specialist to provide written notification to the covered individual's primary care physician of any visit to such specialist. Such notification may include a description of the health care services rendered at the time of the visit.

15. a. Include provisions allowing employees to continue receiving health care services for a period of up to ninety days from the date of the primary care physician's notice of termination from any of the plan's provider panels.

b. The plan shall notify any provider at least ninety days prior to the date of termination of the provider, except when the provider is terminated for cause.

c. For a period of at least ninety days from the date of the notice of a provider's termination from any of the plan's provider panels, except when a provider is terminated for cause, a provider shall be permitted by the plan to render health care services to any of the covered employees who (i) were in an active course of treatment from the provider prior to the notice of termination and (ii) request to continue receiving health care services from the provider.

d. Notwithstanding the provisions of clause a, any provider shall be permitted by the plan to continue rendering health services to any covered employee who has entered the second trimester of pregnancy at the time of the provider's termination of participation, except when a provider is terminated for cause. Such treatment shall, at the covered employee's option, continue through the provision of postpartum care directly related to the delivery.

e. Notwithstanding the provisions of clause a, any provider shall be permitted by the plan to continue rendering health services to any covered employee who is determined to be terminally ill (as defined under § 1861 (dd) (3) (A) of the Social Security Act) at the time of a provider's termination of participation, except when a provider is terminated for cause. Such treatment shall, at the covered employee's option, continue for the remainder of the employee's life for care directly related to the treatment of the terminal illness.

f. A provider who continues to render health care services pursuant to this subdivision shall be reimbursed in accordance with the carrier's agreement with such provider existing immediately before the provider's termination of participation.

16. a. Include coverage for patient costs incurred during participation in clinical trials for treatment studies on cancer, including ovarian cancer trials.

b. The reimbursement for patient costs incurred during participation in clinical trials for treatment studies on cancer shall be determined in the same manner as reimbursement is determined for other medical and surgical procedures. Such coverage shall have durational limits, dollar limits, deductibles, copayments and coinsurance factors that are no less favorable than for physical illness generally.

c. For purposes of this subdivision:

"Cooperative group" means a formal network of facilities that collaborate on research projects and

have an established NIH-approved peer review program operating within the group. "Cooperative group" includes (i) the National Cancer Institute Clinical Cooperative Group and (ii) the National Cancer Institute Community Clinical Oncology Program.

"FDA" means the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

"Multiple project assurance contract" means a contract between an institution and the federal Department of Health and Human Services that defines the relationship of the institution to the federal Department of Health and Human Services and sets out the responsibilities of the institution and the procedures that will be used by the institution to protect human subjects.

"NCI" means the National Cancer Institute.

"NIH" means the National Institutes of Health.

"Patient" means a person covered under the plan established pursuant to this section.

"Patient cost" means the cost of a medically necessary health care service that is incurred as a result of the treatment being provided to a patient for purposes of a clinical trial. "Patient cost" does not include (i) the cost of nonhealth care services that a patient may be required to receive as a result of the treatment being provided for purposes of a clinical trial, (ii) costs associated with managing the research associated with the clinical trial, or (iii) the cost of the investigational drug or device.

d. Coverage for patient costs incurred during clinical trials for treatment studies on cancer shall be provided if the treatment is being conducted in a Phase II, Phase III, or Phase IV clinical trial. Such treatment may, however, be provided on a case-by-case basis if the treatment is being provided in a Phase I clinical trial.

e. The treatment described in clause d shall be provided by a clinical trial approved by:

(1) The National Cancer Institute;

(2) An NCI cooperative group or an NCI center;

(3) The FDA in the form of an investigational new drug application;

(4) The federal Department of Veterans Affairs; or

(5) An institutional review board of an institution in the Commonwealth that has a multiple project assurance contract approved by the Office of Protection from Research Risks of the NCI.

f. The facility and personnel providing the treatment shall be capable of doing so by virtue of their experience, training, and expertise.

g. Coverage under this section shall apply only if:

(1) There is no clearly superior, noninvestigational treatment alternative;

(2) The available clinical or preclinical data provide a reasonable expectation that the treatment will be at least as effective as the noninvestigational alternative; and

(3) The patient and the physician or health care provider who provides services to the patient under the plan conclude that the patient's participation in the clinical trial would be appropriate, pursuant to procedures established by the plan.

17. Include coverage providing a minimum stay in the hospital of not less than twenty-three hours for a covered employee following a laparoscopy-assisted vaginal hysterectomy and forty-eight hours for a covered employee following a vaginal hysterectomy, as outlined in Milliman & Robertson's nationally recognized guidelines. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed as requiring the provision of the total hours referenced when the attending physician, in consultation with the covered employee, determines that a shorter hospital stay is appropriate.

18. (Effective until July 1, 2004) a. Include coverage for biologically based mental illness.

b. For purposes of this subdivision, a "biologically based mental illness" is any mental or nervous condition caused by a biological disorder of the brain that results in a clinically significant syndrome that substantially limits the person's functioning; specifically, the following diagnoses are defined as biologically based mental illness as they apply to adults and children: schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, and drug and alcoholism addiction.

c. Coverage for biologically based mental illnesses shall neither be different nor separate from coverage for any other illness, condition or disorder for purposes of determining deductibles, benefit year or lifetime durational limits, benefit year or lifetime dollar limits, lifetime episodes or treatment limits, copayment and coinsurance factors, and benefit year maximum for deductibles and copayment and coinsurance factors.

d. Nothing shall preclude the undertaking of usual and customary procedures to determine the appropriateness of, and medical necessity for, treatment of biologically based mental illnesses under this option, provided that all such appropriateness and medical necessity determinations are made in the same manner as those determinations made for the treatment of any other illness, condition or disorder covered by such policy or contract.

e. In no case, however, shall coverage for mental disorders provided pursuant to this section be diminished or reduced below the coverage in effect for such disorders on January 1, 1999.

19. a. Include coverage for hearing examinations, hearing aids and related services. Such coverage

shall include one such examination and two hearing aids every 36 months.

b. For the purposes of this subsection:

"Hearing aid" shall mean any wearable instrument or device designed or offered to aid or compensate for impaired human hearing and any parts, attachments, or accessories, including earmolds, but excluding batteries and cords.

"Related services" shall include earmolds, initial batteries and other necessary equipment, maintenance, and adaptation training.

c. In order for coverage to be available under this subsection, services and equipment must be provided by a professional licensed to provide such services or equipment under Chapter 15 (§ 54.1-1500 et seq.), Chapter 26 (§ 54.1-2600 et seq.) or Chapter 29 (§ 54.1-2900 et seq.) of Title 54.1.

C. Claims incurred during a fiscal year but not reported during that fiscal year shall be paid from such funds as shall be appropriated by law. Appropriations, premiums and other payments shall be deposited in the employee health insurance fund, from which payments for claims, premiums, cost containment programs and administrative expenses shall be withdrawn from time to time. The funds of the health insurance fund shall be deemed separate and independent trust funds, shall be segregated from all other funds of the Commonwealth, and shall be invested and administered solely in the interests of the employees and beneficiaries thereof. Neither the General Assembly nor any public officer, employee, or agency shall use or authorize the use of such trust funds for any purpose other than as provided in law for benefits, refunds, and administrative expenses, including but not limited to legislative oversight of the health insurance fund.

D. For the purposes of this section:

"Peer-reviewed medical literature" means a scientific study published only after having been critically reviewed for scientific accuracy, validity, and reliability by unbiased independent experts in a journal that has been determined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors to have met the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. Peer-reviewed medical literature does not include publications or supplements to publications that are sponsored to a significant extent by a pharmaceutical manufacturing company or health carrier.

"Standard reference compendia" means the American Medical Association Drug Evaluations, the American Hospital Formulary Service Drug Information, or the United States Pharmacopoeia Dispensing Information.

"State employee" means state employee as defined in § 51.1-124.3, employee as defined in § 51.1-201, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General, judge as defined in § 51.1-301 and judges, clerks and deputy clerks of regional juvenile and domestic relations, county juvenile and domestic relations, and district courts of the Commonwealth, interns and residents employed by the School of Medicine and Hospital of the University of Virginia, and interns, residents, and employees of the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals Authority as provided in § 23-50.16:24.

E. Provisions shall be made for retired employees to obtain coverage under the above plan. The Commonwealth may, but shall not be obligated to, pay all or any portion of the cost thereof.

F. Any self-insured group health insurance plan established by the Department of Personnel and Training which utilizes a network of preferred providers shall not exclude any physician solely on the basis of a reprimand or censure from the Board of Medicine, so long as the physician otherwise meets the plan criteria established by the Department.

G. The plan established by the Department shall include, in each planning district, at least two health coverage options, each sponsored by unrelated entities. In each planning district that does not have an available health coverage alternative, the Department shall voluntarily enter into negotiations at any time with any health coverage provider who seeks to provide coverage under the plan. This section shall not apply to any state agency authorized by the Department to establish and administer its own health insurance coverage plan separate from the plan established by the Department.

H. 1. Any self-insured group health insurance plan established by the Department of Personnel that includes coverage for prescription drugs on an outpatient basis may apply a formulary to the prescription drug benefits provided by the plan if the formulary is developed, reviewed at least annually, and updated as necessary in consultation with and with the approval of a pharmacy and therapeutics committee, a majority of whose members are actively practicing licensed (i) pharmacists, (ii) physicians, and (iii) other health care providers.

2. If the plan maintains one or more drug formularies, the plan shall establish a process to allow a person to obtain, without additional cost-sharing beyond that provided for formulary prescription drugs in the plan, a specific, medically necessary nonformulary prescription drug if, after reasonable investigation and consultation with the prescribing physician, the formulary drug is determined to be an inappropriate therapy for the medical condition of the person. The plan shall act on such requests within one business day of receipt of the request.

I. Any plan established by the Department of Personnel and Training requiring preauthorization prior

to rendering medical treatment shall have personnel available to provide authorization at all times when such preauthorization is required.

J. Any plan established by the Department of Personnel and Training shall provide to all covered employees written notice of any benefit reductions during the contract period at least thirty days before such reductions become effective.

K. No contract between a provider and any plan established by the Department of Personnel and Training shall include provisions which require a health care provider or health care provider group to deny covered services that such provider or group knows to be medically necessary and appropriate that are provided with respect to a covered employee with similar medical conditions.

L. 1. The Department of Personnel and Training shall appoint an Ombudsman to promote and protect the interests of covered employees under any state employee's health plan.

2. The Ombudsman shall:

a. Assist covered employees in understanding their rights and the processes available to them according to their state health plan.

b. Answer inquiries from covered employees by telephone and electronic mail.

c. Provide to covered employees information concerning the state health plans.

d. Develop information on the types of health plans available, including benefits and complaint procedures and appeals.

e. Make available, either separately or through an existing Internet web site utilized by the Department of Personnel and Training, information as set forth in clause d and such additional information as he deems appropriate.

f. Maintain data on inquiries received, the types of assistance requested, any actions taken and the disposition of each such matter.

g. Upon request, assist covered employees in using the procedures and processes available to them from their health plan, including all appeal procedures. Such assistance may require the review of health care records of a covered employee, which shall be done only with that employee's express written consent. The confidentiality of any such medical records shall be maintained in accordance with the confidentiality and disclosure laws of the Commonwealth.

h. Ensure that covered employees have access to the services provided by the Ombudsman and that the covered employees receive timely responses from the Ombudsman or his representatives to the inquiries.

i. Report annually on his activities to the standing committees of the General Assembly having jurisdiction over insurance and over health and the Joint Commission on Health Care by December 1 of each year.

M. 1. The plan established by the Department of Personnel and Training shall not refuse to accept or make reimbursement pursuant to an assignment of benefits made to a dentist or oral surgeon by a covered employee.

2. For purposes of this subsection, "assignment of benefits" means the transfer of dental care coverage reimbursement benefits or other rights under the plan. The assignment of benefits shall not be effective until the covered employee notifies the plan in writing of the assignment.