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**HOUSE BILL NO. 123**

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 1, 2024

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 38.2-3407.15 of the Code of Virginia, relating to health insurance; ethics and fairness in carrier business practices.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patron—Sullivan

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Referred to Committee on Labor and Commerce

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 38.2-3407.15 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 38.2-3407.15. Ethics and fairness in carrier business practices.**

A. As used in this section:

"Carrier," "enrollee," and "provider" shall have the meanings set forth in § 38.2-3407.10; however, a "carrier" shall also include any person required to be licensed under this title which offers or operates a managed care health insurance plan subject to Chapter 58 (§ 38.2-5800 et seq.) or which provides or arranges for the provision of health care services, health plans, networks or provider panels which are subject to regulation as the business of insurance under this title.

"Claim" means any bill, claim, or proof of loss made by or on behalf of an enrollee or a provider to a carrier (or its intermediary, administrator or representative) with which the provider has a provider contract for payment for health care services under any health plan; however, a "claim" shall not include a request for payment of a capitation or a withhold.

"Clean claim" means a claim ~~(i) that has no material defect or impropriety (including any lack of any reasonably required substantiation documentation) which substantially prevents timely payment from being made on the claim or~~ (ii) with respect to which that does all of the following:

1. Identifies the provider that provided the service with industry-standard identification criteria, including billing information and provider names, identification numbers, and address;

2. Identifies the patient with a carrier-assigned identification number so the carrier can verify the patient was an enrollee at the time of service;

3. Identifies the service rendered using an industry-standard system of procedure or service coding, or, if applicable, a methodology required under the provider contract. The claim shall include a complete listing of all relevant diagnoses, procedures, and service codes, as well as any applicable modifiers;

4. If prior authorization is required for the services listed in the claim, contains verification that prior authorization was obtained in accordance with the provider contract for those services; and

5. Includes additional documentation specific to the services rendered as required by the carrier in its provider contract.

Notwithstanding the above criteria, a claim shall be considered a clean claim if a carrier has failed timely to notify the person submitting the claim of any ~~such~~ defect or impropriety in accordance with this section.

"Health care services" means items or services furnished to any individual for the purpose of preventing, alleviating, curing, or healing human illness, injury or physical disability.

"Health plan" means any individual or group health care plan, subscription contract, evidence of coverage, certificate, health services plan, medical or hospital services plan, accident and sickness insurance policy or certificate, managed care health insurance plan, or other similar certificate, policy, contract or arrangement, and any endorsement or rider thereto, to cover all or a portion of the cost of persons receiving covered health care services, which is subject to state regulation and which is required to be offered, arranged or issued in the Commonwealth by a carrier licensed under this title. Health plan does not mean (i) coverages issued pursuant to Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1395 et seq. (Medicare), Title XIX of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1396 et seq. (Medicaid) or Title XXI of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1397aa et seq. (CHIP), 5 U.S.C. § 8901 et seq. (federal employees), or 10 U.S.C. § 1071 et seq. (TRICARE); or (ii) accident only, credit or disability insurance, long-term care insurance, TRICARE supplement, Medicare supplement, or workers' compensation coverages.

"Provider contract" means any contract between a provider and a carrier (or a carrier's network, provider panel, intermediary or representative) relating to the provision of health care services.

"Retroactive denial of a previously paid claim" or "retroactive denial of payment" means any attempt by a carrier retroactively to collect payments already made to a provider with respect to a claim by

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HB123

59 reducing other payments currently owed to the provider, by withholding or setting off against future  
60 payments, or in any other manner reducing or affecting the future claim payments to the provider.

61 B. Subject to subsection I K, every provider contract entered into by a carrier shall contain specific  
62 provisions which shall require the carrier to adhere to and comply with the following minimum fair  
63 business standards in the processing and payment of claims for health care services:

64 1. A carrier shall pay any claim within 40 days of receipt of the claim except where the obligation of  
65 the carrier to pay a claim is not reasonably clear due to the existence of a reasonable basis supported by  
66 specific information available for review by the person submitting the claim that:

67 a. The claim is determined by the carrier not to be a clean claim due to a good faith determination  
68 or dispute regarding (i) the manner in which the claim form was completed or submitted, (ii) the  
69 eligibility of a person for coverage, (iii) the responsibility of another carrier for all or part of the claim,  
70 (iv) the amount of the claim or the amount currently due under the claim, (v) the benefits covered, or  
71 (vi) the manner in which services were accessed or provided; or

72 b. The claim was submitted fraudulently.

73 Each carrier shall maintain a written or electronic record of the date of receipt of a claim. The  
74 person submitting the claim shall be entitled to inspect such record on request and to rely on that record  
75 or on any other admissible evidence as proof of the fact of receipt of the claim, including without  
76 limitation electronic or facsimile confirmation of receipt of a claim.

77 2. A carrier shall, within 30 days after receipt of a claim, ~~request electronically or in writing from~~  
78 *notify the person submitting the claim of any defect or impropriety that prevents the carrier from*  
79 *deeming the claim a clean claim and request the information and documentation that the carrier*  
80 *reasonably believes will be required to process and pay the claim or to determine if the claim is a clean*  
81 *claim. Upon receipt of the additional information requested under this subsection necessary to make the*  
82 *original claim a clean claim, a carrier shall make the payment of the claim in compliance with this*  
83 *section. No carrier may refuse to pay a claim for health care services rendered pursuant to a provider*  
84 *contract which are covered benefits if the carrier fails timely to notify or attempt to notify the person*  
85 *submitting the claim of the matters identified above unless such failure was caused in material part by*  
86 *the person submitting the claims; however, nothing herein shall preclude such a carrier from imposing a*  
87 *retroactive denial of payment of such a claim if permitted by the provider contract unless such*  
88 *retroactive denial of payment of the claim would violate subdivision 7. Nothing in this subsection shall*  
89 *require a carrier to pay a claim which is not a clean claim. Beginning January 1, 2026, all notifications*  
90 *and information required under this subdivision shall be delivered electronically.*

91 3. Any interest owing or accruing on a claim under § 38.2-3407.1 or 38.2-4306.1, under any  
92 provider contract or under any other applicable law, shall, if not sooner paid or required to be paid, be  
93 paid, without necessity of demand, at the time the claim is paid or within 60 days thereafter.

94 4. a. Every carrier shall establish and implement reasonable policies to permit any provider with  
95 which there is a provider contract (i) to confirm in advance during normal business hours by free  
96 telephone or electronic means if available whether the health care services to be provided are medically  
97 necessary and a covered benefit and (ii) to determine the carrier's requirements applicable to the provider  
98 (or to the type of health care services which the provider has contracted to deliver under the provider  
99 contract) for (a) pre-certification or authorization of coverage decisions, (b) retroactive reconsideration of  
100 a certification or authorization of coverage decision or retroactive denial of a previously paid claim, (c)  
101 provider-specific payment and reimbursement methodology, coding levels and methodology,  
102 downcoding, and bundling of claims, and (d) other provider-specific, applicable claims processing and  
103 payment matters necessary to meet the terms and conditions of the provider contract, including  
104 determining whether a claim is a clean claim. If a carrier routinely, as a matter of policy, bundles or  
105 downcodes claims submitted by a provider, the carrier shall clearly disclose that practice in each  
106 provider contract. Further, such carrier shall either (1) disclose in its provider contracts or on its website  
107 the specific bundling and downcoding policies that the carrier reasonably expects to be applied to the  
108 provider or provider's services on a routine basis as a matter of policy or (2) disclose in each provider  
109 contract a telephone or facsimile number or e-mail address that a provider can use to request the specific  
110 bundling and downcoding policies that the carrier reasonably expects to be applied to that provider or  
111 provider's services on a routine basis as a matter of policy. If such request is made by or on behalf of a  
112 provider, a carrier shall provide the requesting provider with such policies within 10 business days  
113 following the date the request is received.

114 b. Every carrier shall make available to such providers within 10 business days of receipt of a  
115 request, copies of or reasonable electronic access to all such policies which are applicable to the  
116 particular provider or to particular health care services identified by the provider. In the event the  
117 provision of the entire policy would violate any applicable copyright law, the carrier may instead  
118 comply with this subsection by timely delivering to the provider a clear explanation of the policy as it  
119 applies to the provider and to any health care services identified by the provider.

120 5. Every carrier shall pay a claim if the carrier has previously authorized the health care service or

has advised the provider or enrollee in advance of the provision of health care services that the health care services are medically necessary and a covered benefit, unless:

a. The documentation for the claim provided by the person submitting the claim clearly fails to support the claim as originally authorized;

b. The carrier's refusal is because (i) another payor is responsible for the payment, (ii) the provider has already been paid for the health care services identified on the claim, (iii) the claim was submitted fraudulently or the authorization was based in whole or material part on erroneous information provided to the carrier by the provider, enrollee, or other person not related to the carrier, or (iv) the person receiving the health care services was not eligible to receive them on the date of service and the carrier did not know, and with the exercise of reasonable care could not have known, of the person's eligibility status; or

c. During the post-service claims process, it is determined that the claim was submitted fraudulently.

6. In the case of an invasive or surgical procedure, if the carrier has previously authorized a health care service as medically necessary and during the procedure the health care provider discovers clinical evidence prompting the provider to perform a less or more extensive or complicated procedure than was previously authorized, then the carrier shall pay the claim, provided that the additional procedures were (i) not investigative in nature, but medically necessary as a covered service under the covered person's benefit plan; (ii) appropriately coded consistent with the procedure actually performed; and (iii) compliant with a carrier's post-service claims process, including required timing for submission to carrier.

7. No carrier shall impose any retroactive denial of a previously paid claim unless the carrier has provided the reason for the retroactive denial and (i) the original claim was submitted fraudulently, (ii) the original claim payment was incorrect because the provider was already paid for the health care services identified on the claim or the health care services identified on the claim were not delivered by the provider, or (iii) the time which has elapsed since the date of the payment of the original challenged claim does not exceed the lesser of (a) 12 months or (b) the number of days within which the carrier requires under its provider contract that a claim be submitted by the provider following the date on which a health care service is provided. *Effective July 1, 2000, a. However, a provider and a carrier may agree in writing that recoupment of overpayments by withholding or offsetting against future payments may occur after such 12-month limit. A carrier shall notify a provider at least 30 days in advance of any retroactive denial of a claim. Beginning January 1, 2026, this notification and all related provider responses shall be delivered electronically. The electronic method and location for delivery shall be agreed upon by the carrier and provider and included in the provider contract.*

8. Notwithstanding subdivision 7, with respect to provider contracts entered into, amended, extended, or renewed on or after July 1, 2004, no carrier shall impose any retroactive denial of payment or in any other way seek recovery or refund of a previously paid claim unless the carrier specifies in writing the specific claim or claims for which the retroactive denial is to be imposed or the recovery or refund is sought. The written communication shall also contain an explanation of why the claim is being retroactively adjusted. *Beginning January 1, 2026, all written communications, explanations, and related provider responses applicable to this subdivision shall be delivered electronically. The electronic method and location for delivery shall be agreed upon by the carrier and provider and included in the provider contract.*

9. No provider contract shall fail to include or attach at the time it is presented to the provider for execution (i) the fee schedule, reimbursement policy, or statement as to the manner in which claims will be calculated and paid that is applicable to the provider or to the range of health care services reasonably expected to be delivered by that type of provider on a routine basis and (ii) all material addenda, schedules, and exhibits thereto and any policies (including those referred to in subdivision 4) applicable to the provider or to the range of health care services reasonably expected to be delivered by that type of provider under the provider contract.

10. No amendment to any provider contract or to any addenda, schedule, exhibit or policy thereto (or new addenda, schedule, exhibit, or policy) applicable to the provider (or to the range of health care services reasonably expected to be delivered by that type of provider) shall be effective as to the provider, unless the provider has been provided with the applicable portion of the proposed amendment (or of the proposed new addenda, schedule, exhibit, or policy) at least 60 calendar days before the effective date and the provider has failed to notify the carrier within 30 calendar days of receipt of the documentation of the provider's intention to terminate the provider contract at the earliest date thereafter permitted under the provider contract.

11. In the event that the carrier's provision of a policy required to be provided under subdivision 9 or 10 would violate any applicable copyright law, the carrier may instead comply with this section by providing a clear, written explanation of the policy as it applies to the provider.

12. All carriers shall establish, in writing, their claims payment dispute mechanism and shall make

182 this information available to providers. *If a carrier's claim denial is overturned following completion of*  
183 *a dispute review, the carrier shall, on the day the decision to overturn is made, consider the claims*  
184 *impacted by such decision as clean claims. All applicable laws related to the payment of a clean claim*  
185 *shall apply to the payments due.*

186 13. Every carrier shall include in its provider contracts a provision that prohibits a provider from  
187 discriminating against any enrollee solely due to the enrollee's status as a litigant in pending litigation or  
188 a potential litigant due to being involved in a motor vehicle accident. Nothing in this subdivision shall  
189 require a health care provider to treat an enrollee who has threatened to make or has made a  
190 professional liability claim against the provider or the provider's employer, agents, or employees or has  
191 threatened to file or has filed a complaint with a regulatory agency or board against the provider or the  
192 provider's employer, agents, or employees.

193 14. *Beginning July 1, 2025, every carrier shall make available an electronic means for providers to*  
194 *determine whether an enrollee is covered by a health plan.*

195 C. *A provider shall not file a complaint with the Commission for failure to pay claims in accordance*  
196 *with subdivision B 1 unless:*

197 1. *Such provider has made a reasonable effort to confer with the carrier in order to resolve the*  
198 *issues related to all claims that are under dispute. Any request to confer shall be made to the contact*  
199 *listed for such purpose in the provider contract and shall include supporting documentation sufficient*  
200 *for the carrier to identify the claims in question; and*

201 2. *At least 30 calendar days have passed from the date of the request provided that the carrier has*  
202 *been responsive to the providers request to confer. However, if in the judgment of the provider, the*  
203 *carrier has not been responsive to such request, the provider shall not be required to wait at least 30*  
204 *calendar days to file the complaint.*

205 *The provider shall attest in any such complaint that it has satisfied the provisions of this subsection.*

206 D. If the Commission has cause to believe that any provider has engaged in a pattern of potential  
207 violations of subdivision B 13, with no corrective action, the Commission may submit information to the  
208 Board of Medicine or the Commissioner of Health for action. Prior to such submission, the Commission  
209 may provide the provider with an opportunity to cure the alleged violations or provide an explanation as  
210 to why the actions in questions were not violations. If any provider has engaged in a pattern of potential  
211 violations of subdivision B 13, with no corrective action, the Board of Medicine or the Commissioner of  
212 Health may levy a fine or cost recovery upon the provider and take other action as permitted under its  
213 authority. Upon completion of its review of any potential violation submitted by the Commission or  
214 initiated directly by an enrollee, the Board of Medicine or the Commissioner of Health shall notify the  
215 Commission of the results of the review, including where the violation was substantiated, and any  
216 enforcement action taken as a result of a finding of a substantiated violation.

217 D. E. Without limiting the foregoing, in the processing of any payment of claims for health care  
218 services rendered by providers under provider contracts and in performing under its provider contracts,  
219 every carrier subject to regulation by this title shall adhere to and comply with the minimum fair  
220 business standards required under subsection B, and the Commission shall have the jurisdiction to  
221 determine if a carrier has violated the standards set forth in subsection B by failing to include the  
222 requisite provisions in its provider contracts and shall have jurisdiction to determine if the carrier has  
223 failed to implement the minimum fair business standards set out in subdivisions B 1 and 2 in the  
224 performance of its provider contracts.

225 E. F. No carrier shall be in violation of this section if its failure to comply with this section is  
226 caused in material part by the person submitting the claim or if the carrier's compliance is rendered  
227 impossible due to matters beyond the carrier's reasonable control (such as an act of God, insurrection,  
228 strike, fire, or power outages) which are not caused in material part by the carrier.

229 E. G. Any provider who suffers loss as the result of a carrier's violation of this section or a carrier's  
230 breach of any provider contract provision required by this section shall be entitled to initiate an action to  
231 recover actual damages. If the trier of fact finds that the violation or breach resulted from a carrier's  
232 gross negligence and willful conduct, it may increase damages to an amount not exceeding three times  
233 the actual damages sustained. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, in addition to  
234 any damages awarded, such provider also may be awarded reasonable attorney fees and court costs.  
235 Each claim for payment which is paid or processed in violation of this section or with respect to which  
236 a violation of this section exists shall constitute a separate violation. The Commission shall not be  
237 deemed to be a "trier of fact" for purposes of this subsection.

238 G. H. No carrier (or its network, provider panel or intermediary) shall terminate or fail to renew the  
239 employment or other contractual relationship with a provider, or any provider contract, or otherwise  
240 penalize any provider, for invoking any of the provider's rights under this section or under the provider  
241 contract.

242 H. I. *Except where otherwise provided in this section, beginning July 1, 2025, carriers shall deliver*  
243 *provider contracts, related amendments, and notices exclusively to providers in an electronic format*

244 *other than electronic facsimile. Beginning January 1, 2026, the provider shall submit provider contracts,*  
245 *amendments, and notices to carriers exclusively in an electronic format other than electronic facsimile.*  
246 *The electronic method and location for delivery shall be agreed upon by the carrier and provider and*  
247 *included in the provider contract.*

248 *J. This section shall apply only to carriers subject to regulation under this title and shall apply to the*  
249 *carrier and provider, regardless of any vendors, subcontractors, or other entities that have been*  
250 *contracted by the carrier or the provider to perform duties applicable to this section.*

251 ~~I.~~ *K. This section shall apply with respect to provider contracts entered into, amended, extended or*  
252 *renewed on or after July 1, 1999.*

253 ~~J.~~ *L. Pursuant to the authority granted by § 38.2-223, the Commission may promulgate such rules*  
254 *and regulations as it may deem necessary to implement this section.*

255 ~~K.~~ *M. The Commission shall have no jurisdiction to adjudicate individual controversies arising out of*  
256 *this section.*