

- SUBJECT:** Authorizing health plan payments for county air ambulance services
- COMMITTEE:** County Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 aye — Coleman, Stucky, Anderson, Lopez, Spiller, Stephenson, J. Turner
1 nay — Cason
1 absent — Longoria
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 9 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar
- WITNESSES:** No public hearing.
- BACKGROUND:** Concerns have been raised that certain county-operated public emergency helicopter services are often out-of-network for their patients, which can lead to balance billing and the largely unsuccessful and unpopular use of third-party debt collection by counties for these services. There have been calls to address this issue by allowing counties to consider a health benefit plan payment as full payment for air ambulance services regardless of the amount charged.
- DIGEST:** SB 790 would authorize a county to elect to consider a health benefit plan payment towards a claim for air ambulance services provided by the county as payment in full regardless of the amount the county charged for those services.
- A county would be prohibited from practicing balance billing for a claim for which the county made such an election. "Balance billing" would be defined to mean charging an enrollee in a health benefit plan to recover the balance of a health care provider's fee for a service received by the enrollee that was not fully reimbursed by the health benefit plan.
- The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

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NOTES: The House companion to SB 790, HB 4037 by Howard, was considered by the House County Affairs Committee in a public hearing on April 15 and left pending.