



Repealing Transparency—Shutting the Door on Hospital Reporting

"It's ironic," he said, "that it's easier to find more information today on what type of refrigerator to buy than on which hospital provides the best cardiac care." That is a quote from former state Representative and Chair of the House Healthcare Access and Affordability Committee, Jim Raussen upon passage of 126-HB197. The legislation, which went into effect in November 2006, requires hospitals to make annual reports on prices and volume of patients on inpatient and outpatient services most frequently provided by the hospital and to report quality measures on procedures and hospital acquired infections.

With the passage of 126-HB 197, the door was opened to give consumers information on quality and cost. To make data available to patients and the public, the new law specified quality data that hospitals were required to post on a newly created website, found at www.ohiohospitalcompare.ohio.gov. The legislation received support from Ohio's small business community and was supported across party lines. In fact, this legislation passed the House of Representatives 94-1 and passed the Senate 33-0.

Now, five years later, Representative Sears has introduced legislation, HB353, that would repeal these reporting requirements and slam the door shut on transparency for consumers. In particular, HB 353 repeals section 3727.35, containing the requirement that hospitals provide specified performance information which is made available in a manner that allows the public to compare the performance of hospitals in meeting measures for specific diagnosis and procedures and to make comparisons by geographic regions such as county or zip code.

Hospitals claim that they are already required to report this data to the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. This is only partly true: Much of the data now required for Ohio will be required to be reported to CMS in the future but is not reported now. And some critical patient safety data—on infections and perinatal care—is not slated to be reportable to CMS in the future at all.

Consumers need more and better reporting—not less. As reported by Office of Health Transformation Director Greg Moody, states with the highest performing health systems all have transparency of price and quality information, with standardized performance measures that are reported publicly.

Our health care delivery system needs to be improved. It is hard to fix a system that is not measured or where consumers do not have access to data. Measuring provider performance and publicly reporting the information promises to drive improvement in health care quality. Consumers need information so they can have more control over their health care decision-making. Payers—including public and private insurers, businesses, and consumers—need information so they can purchase care based on quality and value.

Do you want surgery at a hospital that has higher than average rates of infection? Would you like to know that your hospital takes measures to protect you while treating you for heart attacks or pneumonia? Do you want to be able to compare hospitals on these quality measures and on cost? Don't let HB353 wipe out hospital reporting in Ohio.

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December 13, 2011