

2019 SESSION
(HB1661)

GOVERNOR'S VETO

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 1661. This legislation allows certain agricultural organizations to provide health insurance via association health plans and expands the availability of association health plans beyond what is currently allowed in Virginia.

House Bill 1661 is concerning for several reasons. Association health plans (AHPs) are not required to cover essential health benefits including maternity care and prescription coverage. Additionally, AHPs would be able to set different premium rates based on characteristics like age, gender, job, and preexisting conditions. This bill would undermine current efforts to stabilize the Virginia health insurance marketplace. Virginians who enroll in AHPs may be disproportionately healthy when they enroll, leading to higher premiums for Virginians who do not qualify for an AHP and remain in the marketplace.

Virginia took a positive step to increase the availability of quality, affordable, and comprehensive health care coverage through Medicaid expansion for individuals whose income is lower than 138% of the Federal Poverty Level. Our responsibility is to now look at solutions such as those proposed by the Market Stability Workgroup in order to improve affordability across the Commonwealth's health insurance markets. This legislation addressed the concerns a segment of Virginians have regarding health care costs. We look forward to working together holistically to ensure all Virginians have lower health care costs. All Virginians have a right to quality, affordable, and comprehensive coverage. My administration remains committed to this goal. House Bill 1661 would undermine these larger efforts.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION

That the amendment in the nature of a substitute (19107828D) be accepted.