

August 21, 2015

To the Honorable Members of
The Illinois Senate,
99th General Assembly:

Today I veto Senate Bill 661 from the 99th General Assembly in order to shield Illinois from significant spending mandates and to protect our State's health care providers from unnecessary civil liability.

Senate Bill 661 creates the Hepatitis C Screening Act, which stems from the hard work of the Illinois Hepatitis C Task Force. This bill requires health care practitioners, regardless of setting, to offer a hepatitis C screening test to individuals born between 1945 and 1965, unless the health care practitioner reasonably believes that certain conditions are present. The bill also requires all insurers, public and private, to provide coverage for hepatitis C screening and confirmatory testing consistent with reasonable medical standards.

I support the General Assembly's determination to combat hepatitis C. I further applaud the members of the Illinois Hepatitis C Task Force for their efforts to raise awareness of this very serious problem.

Senate Bill 661, however, imposes significant short-term financial obligations upon the State Medicaid agency and the State health insurance plan at a time when Illinois is facing a fiscal crisis. The bill would help identify Illinoisans afflicted with hepatitis C, but it does not address the important question of how to pay for the expensive treatment necessary to defeat the disease. It is an untenable position to diagnose a disease but not account for funding for the treatment.

The bill further mandates that doctors adhere to the "Testing Recommendations for Chronic Hepatitis C Virus Infection." By dictating a specific standard of care to doctors, the bill sets an ill-advised precedent with respect to the State's health care industry. This bill replaces doctors' ability to provide patient-centered care with government-mandated medical care.

This could expose our doctors to new and costly litigation, which will further increase medical costs.

Therefore, pursuant to Section 9(b) of Article IV of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, I hereby return Senate Bill 661, entitled "AN ACT concerning public health", with the foregoing objections, vetoed in its entirety.

Sincerely,

Bruce Rauner
GOVERNOR