



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 28, 2015

CONTACT: GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE
(850) 717-9282
media@eog.myflorida.com

Gov. Rick Scott to Protect Floridians Against Hospital Price Gouging

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Upon today's meeting of the Commission on Healthcare and Hospital Funding, Governor Rick Scott announced that he will work with the Legislature to increase transparency for Florida hospitals and empower patients to fight against hospital price gouging in the upcoming 2016 legislative session.

Governor Scott wants to empower Florida citizens to fight against unfair hospital prices by requiring hospitals to post their prices and average payments, along with their annual IRS reports, in an easily accessible location on their website. Governor Scott is also proposing to create additional protections for Florida patients by allowing the referral of any suspected hospital price gouging to the appropriate law enforcement agency or regulatory authority.

Governor Rick Scott said, "We must empower Florida patients to fight against unfairly high hospital costs by requiring hospitals to publish their pricing information in a usable online format. The high cost of healthcare continues to hurt some of our most vulnerable families in Florida, and the best way to guard against unfairly high hospital costs being passed on to patients is to require hospitals to be fully transparent with their own costs and patient charges. Most Florida hospitals receive state taxpayer dollars. We must not use state money to subsidize hospitals who are charging our citizens unfairly high prices for services they receive, often during a time of personal crisis.

"We must also require the same level of transparency and financial disclosure for publicly funded and government-owned hospitals in Florida that we do for private hospitals. Healthcare spending in our state is the largest part of our state budget, and with the federal government ending the Low Income Pool program, Florida taxpayers continue to pay more every year to fund Florida hospitals. A publicly available financial disclosure will ensure that we know where taxpayer money is going and if it is being used to provide patients hospital services or fund record-high hospital profits and CEO bonuses.

"I look forward to working with the Legislature in the upcoming session to make reforms that will allow patients to see what revenues hospitals are collecting and what they are billing patients for medical procedures. With our proposed reforms, patients who believe their hospital bills are unconscionably high will have the ability to ask for a third-party review of their charges. We must address the high costs hospitals pass on to patients if we are going to make healthcare more affordable and accessible in Florida. That means we must empower patients through more public information and transparency about hospital spending and pricing. We must also give patients a place to go when they feel they have been charged too much for a hospital service."

To empower patients and increase transparency at Florida's hospitals, Governor Scott proposes the following reforms to:

1. Empower patients by updating the existing law governing the [FloridaHealthFinder.gov](https://www.floridahealthfinder.gov) website with the aim of helping consumers estimate their expected out-of-pocket expenses and chances of experiencing adverse incidents while at a specific healthcare facility.
2. Empower patients by requiring all hospitals to post on their website in a prominent location the prices and average payments received for all products and services offered, along with performance on patient quality measures agreed upon by the existing State Consumer Health Information and Policy Advisory Council.
3. Empower patients by creating new protections against unconscionable prices to include all products and services rendered to a patient during a medical emergency or other course of medically essential treatment. With this policy, patients can refer complaints of price gouging at hospitals and surgical centers to the appropriate law enforcement agency or regulatory authority for investigation and potential prosecution. Among the 50 hospitals in the United States with the highest markup of prices over their actual costs of providing care, 20 are in Florida – the largest of any state.
4. Empower patients by requiring tax exempt hospitals, which do not pay property or income taxes, to post their annual financial reports (Form 990) to the IRS online. IRS Form 990 contains detailed information on the filing of an institution's programs and finances, such as executive compensation, lobbying expenditures and revenue. Under current law, only investor-owned hospitals (privately run) are required to do this and the Governor would expand this requirement to every hospital in the state, including not-for-profit institutions.

Carlos Beruff, Chair of the Commission on Healthcare and Hospital Funding said, "Patients should have access to all the information they need to make the best decisions for their healthcare. I applaud the Governor's call to increase transparency at Florida hospitals because it will undoubtedly empower patients when they are making critical decisions about their health."

Tom Kuntz, Vice Chair of the Commission said, "By requiring hospitals to post their pricing information in a user-friendly format online, Florida families and patients will be well informed and empowered to make the best decisions regarding their health. Healthcare spending is a huge part of the state budget, and posting financial disclosures from all hospitals online will ensure Florida taxpayers know exactly where their money is going."

Marili Cancio Johnson P.A., Commission member said, "Patients should feel as comfortable as possible when they visit Florida's hospitals, and that includes understanding the cost of the services provided. I thank Governor Scott for his commitment to holding hospitals accountable and enabling patients to make informed decision about their healthcare."

General Chip Diehl, Commission member said, "We have to do all we can to ensure patients are not price gouged when they go to the hospital. Governor Scott's call to extend consumer protections to ensure transparency against excessive pricing will help every Floridian when they visit the hospital."

Eugene Lamb, Commission member said, "I appreciate Governor Scott's commitment to putting patients first. We have to make healthcare costs more transparent for families and taxpayers and the Governor's proposal is a great step forward."

Dr. Jason Rosenberg, Commission member said, "Healthcare will be more affordable and accessible in Florida with Governor Scott's proposal because hospitals will have to be fully transparent with their own costs and patient charges. I appreciate Governor Scott's continued work to make sure Florida families have access to affordable healthcare in Florida."

Sam Seevers, Commission member said, "It is important Floridians have all the information they need when making informed decisions about their health and that's why I fully support Governor Scott's efforts to increase transparency at Florida's hospitals."

Dr. Ken Smith, Commission member said, "The Commission on Healthcare and Hospital Funding has worked hard these past few months to see how hospitals can get better at serving patients. We know that patients often visit the hospital and are faced with high bills and uncertain costs. Patients deserve better- plain and simple. I appreciate the Governor's commitment to fixing this issue at our hospitals."

Robert Spottswood, Commission member said, "Extending consumer protections against excessive pricing will undoubtedly help every Floridian that visits a hospital. Too often, families have to visit a hospital in emergency circumstances and are surprised with an exorbitant bill after they leave. These reforms will help families educate themselves on the cost of visiting a hospital, and will help protect them from unforeseen expenses."