

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 52

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the right of state hospital patients to designate an essential caregiver for in-person visitation.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 552, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Subchapter F to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER F. RIGHT TO ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER VISITS

Sec. 552.201. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "essential caregiver" means a family member, friend, guardian, or other individual a patient, patient's guardian, or patient's legally authorized representative selects for in-person visits.

Sec. 552.202. PATIENT'S RIGHT TO ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER VISITS. A patient, the patient's guardian, or the patient's legally authorized representative has the right to designate an essential caregiver with whom a state hospital may not prohibit in-person visitation.

Sec. 552.203. ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS. (a) Notwithstanding Section 552.202, the executive commissioner by rule shall develop guidelines to assist state hospitals in establishing essential caregiver visitation policies and procedures. The guidelines must require the hospitals to:

(1) allow a patient, patient's guardian, or patient's legally authorized representative to designate for in-person

1 visitation an essential caregiver;

2 (2) establish a visitation schedule allowing the  
3 essential caregiver to visit the patient for at least two hours each  
4 day;

5 (3) establish procedures to enable physical contact  
6 between the patient and essential caregiver; and

7 (4) obtain the signature of the essential caregiver  
8 certifying the caregiver will follow the hospital's safety  
9 protocols and any other policies, procedures, or rules established  
10 under this section.

11 (b) A state hospital may not establish safety protocols  
12 under this section that are more stringent than the safety  
13 protocols the hospital establishes for hospital staff.

14 Sec. 552.204. REVOCATION OF ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER  
15 DESIGNATION. (a) A state hospital may revoke an individual's  
16 designation as an essential caregiver if the individual violates  
17 the hospital's policies, procedures, or safety protocols  
18 established under Section 552.203.

19 (b) If a state hospital revokes an individual's designation  
20 as an essential caregiver under this section, the patient,  
21 patient's guardian, or patient's legally authorized representative  
22 has the right to immediately designate another individual as the  
23 patient's essential caregiver.

24 (c) The commission by rule shall establish an appeals  
25 process to evaluate the revocation of an individual's designation  
26 as an essential caregiver under this section.

27 Sec. 552.205. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER

1 VISITS. (a) A state hospital may petition the commission to  
2 suspend in-person essential caregiver visits for not more than  
3 seven days if in-person visitation poses a serious community health  
4 risk. The commission may deny the hospital's request to suspend  
5 in-person essential caregiver visitation if the commission  
6 determines that in-person visitation does not pose a serious  
7 community health risk.

8 (b) A state hospital may request an extension from the  
9 commission to suspend in-person essential caregiver visitation for  
10 more than seven days. The commission may not approve an extension  
11 for a period that exceeds seven days, and the hospital must  
12 separately request each extension.

13 (c) A state hospital may not suspend in-person essential  
14 caregiver visitation in any year for more than 14 consecutive days  
15 or 45 days total.

16 Sec. 552.206. PROVISION OF NECESSARY PATIENT CARE BY  
17 ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER. This subchapter may not be construed as  
18 requiring an essential caregiver to provide necessary care to a  
19 patient, and a state hospital may not require an essential  
20 caregiver to provide the necessary care.

21 SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date  
22 of this Act, the executive commissioner of the Health and Human  
23 Services Commission shall prescribe the guidelines and adopt the  
24 rules required by Subchapter F, Chapter 552, Health and Safety  
25 Code, as added by this Act.

26 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.