

**The Florida Senate**  
**PROFESSIONAL STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: Banking and Insurance Committee

BILL: SB 666

INTRODUCER: Senator Fasano

SUBJECT: Fiscal Intermediary Services Organizations

DATE: February 27, 2007      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Johnson	Deffenbaugh	BI	<b>Favorable</b>
2.			HR	
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

**I. Summary:**

The laws regulating health maintenance organizations (HMOs) also provide for the regulation of fiscal intermediary services organizations (FISOs) by the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR). The law is designed to protect funds received from an HMO and held by these entities, which have an obligation to distribute those funds to health care providers who contract with the HMO.

The bill revises the definition of entities that must be registered as a FISO by deleting the exemption for entities that are owned, operated, or controlled by certain licensed entities. As revised, only the licensed entities themselves would be exempt, including hospitals, authorized insurers, third party administrators, prepaid limited health service organizations, and HMOs. Also, the current exemption for physician group practices would be limited to group practices providing services under the scope of licenses of the members of that group practice.

The bill further requires FISOs to comply with certain statutory requirements that apply to HMOs relating to payment of claims, including the prompt of claims; paying claims for which treatment authorization procedures have been followed; and requirements for adverse determinations of claims. In addition, the OIR would be required to periodically examine their operations and to take remedial action when necessary.

This bill substantially amends the following section of the Florida Statutes: 641.316.

## II. Present Situation:

### Regulation of Health Maintenance Organizations

The Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) regulates health maintenance organization solvency, contracts, rates, and marketing activities under part I of chapter 641, F.S., while the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) regulates the quality of care provided by HMOs under part III of chapter 641, F.S. Any entity that is issued a certificate of authority and that is otherwise in compliance with the licensure provisions under part I may enter into contracts in Florida to provide an agreed-upon set of comprehensive health care services to subscribers.

### Fiscal Intermediary Services Organizations (FISOs)

Legislation in 1997 amended the HMO laws to provide for the regulation of FISOs under s. 641.316, F.S.<sup>1</sup> At that time, some health care professionals were contracting with unregulated entities to collect payments from HMOs on the providers' behalf and to distribute those funds to the contracting health care providers. There were reported cases of misappropriation of funds by such entities, with no apparent recourse to regulatory agencies. Essentially, the law is designed to protect funds received from an HMO and held by entities, which have an obligation to distribute those funds to medical professionals who contract with the HMO.

A fiscal intermediary services organization is defined as:

. . . a person or entity which performs fiduciary or fiscal intermediary services to health care professionals who contract with health maintenance organizations, other than a fiscal intermediary services organization owned, operated, or controlled by a hospital licensed under chapter 395, an insurer licensed under chapter 624, a third party administrator licensed under chapter 626, a prepaid limited health service organization licensed under chapter 636, a health maintenance organization licensed under chapter 641, or physician group practices as defined in s. 456.053(3)(h).<sup>2</sup>

The term, fiduciary or fiscal intermediary services means:

. . . reimbursements received or collected on behalf of health care professionals for services rendered, patient and provider accounting, financial reporting and auditing, receipts and collections management, compensation and reimbursement disbursement services, or other related fiduciary services pursuant to health care professional contracts with health maintenance organizations. . .<sup>3</sup>

The above definition of a FISO exempts physician group practices, however, it is not clear that this exemption is limited to providing fiscal intermediary services only to members of that group practice, though that may be the intent. This appears to be a broader exemption than a similar exemption for physician group practices from licensure as an administrator in s. 626.88(1)(o), F.S. (See, Administrators, below.) That statute limits the exemption for physician group practices to providing services under the scope of the license of the members of the group practice. The definition of a FISO also exempts organizations owned, operated, or

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 97-159, L.O.F.; s. 641.316, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 641.316(2)(b), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Section 641.316(2)(a), F.S.

controlled by various licensed entities, such as hospitals, insurers, third party administrators, HMOs, etc. In contrast, the exemption from licensure as an administrator includes licensed insurers, HMOs, and certain other entities, but does not exempt subsidiaries or other independent organizations that are owned, operated, or controlled by such licensed entities.

The express legislative intent of the statute is to ensure the financial soundness of FISOs. A FISO that is operated for the purpose of acquiring and administering provider contracts with managed care plans must secure and maintain a fidelity bond and a surety bond. As currently required, a fidelity bond must be maintained in the minimum amount of 10 percent of the funds handled by the FISO during the prior year or \$1 million, whichever is less, but not less than \$50,000. This bond protects the FISO from loss due to dishonesty of its employees. A surety bond must also be maintained in the minimum amount of 5 percent of the funds handled by the FISO during the prior year or \$250,000, whichever is less, but not less than \$10,000. The surety bond protects against misappropriation of funds within the FISO's control or custody.

A FISO registering with the OIR must meet certain application requirements of chapter 641, F.S. that apply to HMOs. These require that a FISO provide the OIR with a list of the names, addresses and official capacities of the persons who are responsible for the operations of the company, including officers, directors, and owners of more than 5 percent of the common stock of the company. The listed persons must fully disclose all contracts or arrangements between them and the company, including any conflicts of interest, and must submit autobiographical statements, fingerprints, and an independently performed background report. In general, receiving authority to operate as a FISO is conditioned on the OIR being satisfied that the ownership, control and management of the entity is competent and trustworthy, and possesses managerial experience that would make the proposed operation beneficial to its constituents.

There are currently 16 active FISOs registered with OIR. Interviews with representatives of the OIR indicate that after a FISO is registered, there is generally no regulatory activity other than periodic review of the surety bond and fidelity bonds to determine if the amounts are adequate relative to the amount of funds handled annually by the FISO, as required by statute. There are no documented investigations or regulatory actions that have been taken against a FISO.

### **Regulation of ("Third Party") Administrators**

A person who acts as an administrator, more commonly referred to as a third party administrator or TPA, must be licensed by the OIR. Section 626.88, F.S. defines an administrator as:

. . . any person who directly or indirectly solicits or effects coverage of, collects charges or premiums from, or adjusts or settles claims on residents of this state in connection with authorized commercial self insurance funds or with insured or self-insured programs which provide life or health insurance coverage...or any person who, through a health care risk contract as defined in s. 641.234, F.S., with an insurer or health maintenance organization, provides billing and collection services to health insurers and health maintenance organizations on behalf of health care providers. . .<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Section 626.88(1), F.S.

The two definitions for a FISO and an administrator overlap to some extent, by encompassing persons or entities that provide billing and collection services to HMOs on behalf of health care providers. However, the definition for an administrator includes authority to engage in claims adjudication or collection of premiums for a health insurer or HMO, which activities are not authorized by the FISO statute. Administrators that are licensed by the OIR are exempt from the requirement of being registered as a FISO.

The requirements for administrators under ss. 626.88 and 626.894, F.S., are more extensive than the regulation of FISOs. For example, an administrator must make its books and records available to OIR for examination, audit, and inspection and must maintain its business records and file annual financial statements with the OIR. However, the fidelity bond requirement may be less for an administrator as compared to a FISO, depending on the amount of funds handled, and a separate surety bond is not required for an administrator as it is for a FISO.

Administrators must have a written agreement with an insurer containing specified provisions. The insurance company, rather than the administrator, must be responsible for determining the benefits, rates underwriting criteria, and claims payment procedures.<sup>5</sup> A payment to the administrator of any premiums on behalf of the insured are deemed to have been received by the insurer and all premiums collected by an administrator on behalf of an insurer must be held by the administrator in a fiduciary capacity. If an administrator is collecting premiums for more than one insurer, the administrator must keep records clearly recording each insurer's accounts.

The administrator law requires that a person who provides billing and collection services to HMOs on behalf of health care providers must comply with s. 641.3155, F.S., the prompt payment statute, and s. 641.51(4), F.S., which requires that only a Florida-licensed allopathic physician or osteopathic physician may render an adverse determination regarding a service provided by a physician and specifies procedures that must be followed.<sup>6</sup>

### **Payment Documentation by FISOs and Administrators**

In 1999, the Legislature amended the FISO and administrator laws to require that payment by a fiscal intermediary to a health care provider include specified information.<sup>7</sup> This was in response to complaints by health care providers that claims payments by FISOs did not delineate sufficient information for the providers to reconcile their records as to which claims were being paid. The law now requires that for a capitated health care provider, the statement must include the number of patients covered by the contract, the rate per patient, total amount of payment, and the identification of the plan on which behalf the payment is made. For a noncapitated health care provider, the statement must include an explanation of services being reimbursed, including the patient name, date of service, procedure code, amount of reimbursement, and plan identification.

### **Prompt Payment Requirements**

The law requires HMOs to reimburse claims by providers within 35 days of receipt, subject to a 10 percent interest penalty for late payment.<sup>8</sup> Commonly referred to as the prompt payment law, the law also includes a definition of a clean claim, other specific time frames for actions relative

---

<sup>5</sup> Sections 626.8817 and 626.882, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 626.88, F.S.

<sup>7</sup> ch. 99-275, L.O.F.; ss. 626.883(6) and 641.316(2)(a), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 641.3155, F.S.

to claims payments, and required procedures for HMOs filing claims against providers for overpayments. The law also prohibits HMOs from systematic downcoding with the intent to deny reimbursement otherwise due. The law does not define downcoding, but the term is generally understood to mean an HMO substituting a procedure code that is a lower level of service with a lower reimbursement rate than the procedure billed by the provider.

### **HMO Responsibility for Violations of Prompt Pay Law (etc.) if Payment Obligations are Transferred**

A law enacted in 2002 holds HMOs ultimately responsible for compliance with certain statutory requirements related to prompt payment, treatment authorization, and adverse determinations, if the HMO transfers its payment obligations to a licensed administrator.<sup>9</sup> However, the law apparently does not hold an HMO responsible for compliance with such requirements if it transfers its payment obligations to an entity other than a licensed administrator.

Specifically, this law provides that if an HMO, through a health care risk contract, transfers to any entity the obligations to pay a provider for any claim arising from services provided to a subscriber, that the HMO remains responsible for any violations of three specified statutes:

- Section 641.3155, F.S., which are the prompt payment requirements;
- Section 641.3156, F.S., which requires HMOs to pay claims for treatment if a provider follows the treatment authorization procedures and receives authorization; and
- Section 641.51(4), F.S., which requires that only a Florida licensed allopathic physician or osteopathic physician may render an adverse determination regarding a service provided by a physician and specifies procedures that must be followed.

The law also provides the following definitions, which apply to administrative, provider, and management contracts:

- Health care risk contract means: a contract under which an entity receives compensation in exchange for providing to the health maintenance organization a provider network or other services which may include administrative services.
- Entity means: . . . a person licensed as an administrator under s. 626.88, F.S., and does not include any provider or group practice under s. 456.053, F.S., providing services under the scope of the license of the provider or the members of the group practice. The term does not include a hospital providing billing, claims, and collection services solely on its own and its physicians' behalf and providing services under the scope of its license.

The enactment of the prompt payment requirements and persistent efforts by health care provider groups to document complaints and seek enforcement actions by the OIR have resulted in market conduct examinations and regulatory sanctions against HMOs violating these provisions. An interim project by the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee in 2005 (cited below) reviewed 22 market conduct examinations by the Office of Insurance Regulation of HMOs that found violations of the prompt payment statute, which resulted in consent orders and corrective action by the targeted HMO, including payment of required interest to providers and, in 14 of these cases, fines against the HMO ranging from \$10,000 to \$85,500.

<sup>9</sup> Ch. 2002-389, L.O.F.; s. 641.234, F.S.

Some of these examinations included situations where HMOs contracted with entities referred to as “management service organizations” and “independent practice associations” which made payments to providers on behalf of the HMO and which did not appear to have been licensed administrators. Interviews with the OIR personnel indicated that the OIR attempted to hold an HMO responsible for violations of prompt payment requirements regardless of whom the HMO may have contracted with to perform payment services. In the market conduct examinations of this type reviewed, a Consent Order was issued by the Office with the agreement of the HMO, where the HMO consented to pay a fine and to take corrective actions, but did not agree with the findings of the Consent Order.

### **Committee Staff Interim Project**

The Present Situation, above, summarizes the background and findings in the 2005 Senate Banking and Insurance Committee staff interim project, Determining the Sufficiency of Regulation of Third Party Administrators and Fiscal Intermediary Services Organizations (2005-109). The interim project made the following recommendations:

- Expand the requirements of s. 641.234(4), F.S., to hold a HMO responsible for statutory requirements related to payment to health care providers if the HMO transfers to any entity the obligations to pay providers. The current law may limit this liability to HMO contracts with licensed administrators and limit this responsibility to violations of only certain statutes.
- Narrow the exemption from registration as a FISO for a physician group practice in s. 641.316, F.S., to physician group practices providing fiscal intermediary services to members of the group practice.
- Narrow the exemption from registration as a FISO for licensed insurers, HMOs, administrators, hospitals, and prepaid limited health service organizations to those entities themselves, rather than any entity owned, operated, or controlled by such licensed entities.
- Consider, as an alternative, repealing the FISO statute and require entities to be licensed as third party administrators if they provide fiscal intermediary services to providers under contract with HMO.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** amends s. 641.316, F.S., by revising the definition of who must be registered as a FISO by deleting the exemption for entities that are owned, operated, or controlled by certain licensed entities. As revised, only the licensed entities themselves would be exempt, including hospitals, authorized insurers, third party administrators, prepaid limited health service organizations, and HMOs. Also, the current exemption for physician group practices would be limited to group practices providing services under the scope of licenses of the members of that group practice.

The bill requires FISOs to be subject to s. 641.27, F.S., which requires OIR to conduct examinations of HMOs. The effect is to require the OIR to conduct periodic examinations of the operations of the FISO and to take remedial action when necessary. The bill further requires FISOs to comply with the following statutory requirements (which apply to HMOs):

- Section 641.3155, F.S., which are the prompt payment requirements;
- Section 641.3156, F.S., which requires HMOs to pay claims for treatment if a provider follows the treatment authorization procedures and receives authorization; and
- Section 641.51(4), F.S., which requires that only a Florida licensed allopathic physician or osteopathic physician may render an adverse determination regarding a service provided by a physician and specifies procedures that must be followed.

The bill requires FISOs to comply with s. 641.21(1)(j), F.S., which requires the FISOs to provide additional reasonable data, financial statements, and other information as requested by the OIR.

**Section 2** provides that this act takes effect October 1, 2007.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

##### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

##### C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

#### **V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**

##### A. Tax/Fee Issues:

See Private Sector, below.

##### B. Private Sector Impact:

The application of increased regulation of FISOs would increase fiscal protection for medical providers and health maintenance organizations transacting services with a fiscal intermediary service organization.

An indeterminate number of entities which are no longer exempt from registration with OIR as a fiscal intermediary services organization would be subject to expenses associated with registering with the OIR, including, but not limited to: a surety bond and a fidelity bond, and fingerprint processing fees. In addition, the FISO would be responsible for paying the costs of any expenses associated with a market conduct examination conducted by the OIR. Pursuant to s. 641.27, F.S., such expenses may not exceed a maximum of \$50,000 for any 1-year period.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

Application of s. 641.27, F.S., relating to examinations, will require the OIR to conduct onsite examinations at least once every 5 years. There are currently 16 FISOs registered with the OIR.

There is currently no registration fee charged for FISO registration. The OIR states that it cannot absorb the additional regulatory responsibilities using current resources. The number of entities that would be required to register with the OIR and be subject to examination by the OIR is indeterminate at this time.

In order to absorb the expanded regulatory responsibilities required the OIR requests authorization for two positions and an appropriation of \$126,723 for purposes of implementing this legislation. These positions include one Financial Examiner, for purposes of conducting examinations, and one Management Review Specialist, see below:

**Financial Examiner/Analyst II**

	<u>Recurring</u>	<u>Non-Recurring</u>
Salaries and Benefits	\$50,258	
Expense	\$6,498	\$3,426
OCO		\$1,300
Human Resources	\$401	

The Management Review Specialist position will be used for the purposes of examination oversight, review of workpapers, and preparation of compliance reports related to the application of prompt pay, treatment authorization requirements, and second opinion notification requirements specified by this legislation:

**Management Review Specialist**

	<u>Recurring</u>	<u>Non-Recurring</u>
Salaries and Benefits	\$53,232	
Expense	\$6,489	
OCO		\$3,426
Human Resources	\$401	\$1,300

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

The OIR has expressed concern that the bill requires FISOs, which are regulated by the OIR, to comply with s. 641.51(4), F.S., adverse determinations related to that requires written notification to a subscriber of a providers adverse determination; however, this statute is under the jurisdiction of the Agency for Health Care Administration.

---

The bill requires FISOs to comply with s. 641.21(1)(j), F.S., which requires the FISOs to provide additional reasonable data, financial statements, and other information as requested by the OIR. However, there are no financial requirements made of FISOs upon registration or thereafter, other than maintaining a fidelity bond and surety bond.

---

This Senate Professional Staff Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

---



## **VIII. Summary of Amendments:**

None.

---

This Senate Professional Staff Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

---