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## **New Law Requires Hospitals to Disclose Financial Assistance Policies**

***Bill sponsored by State Rep. Merika Coleman gives patients easier access to financial assistance information***

BIRMINGHAM AL. – A bill sponsored by State Representative Merika Coleman was signed into law requiring hospitals to fully disclose written information to patients regarding their financial assistance policies. The bill, which will go into effect October 1, 2009, requires that each hospital bill or other summary of charges include a statement that a patient who meets certain income criteria may qualify for assistance. Hospitals will also be required to conspicuously post a sign in the admission and registration areas with the following notice:

***"You may be eligible for financial assistance under the terms and conditions the hospital offers to qualified patients. For additional information, contact the hospital financial assistance representative."***

The bill is an effort to help ease the health care burden on needy families. "In these hard economic times, it was important to me to do something to help people struggling to pay their hospital bill. The new law is a win-win for both the hospital and the patients", said Rep.

Coleman. Coleman is currently pursuing the District 19 Senate seat vacated by E.B. McClain and health care reform is a major component of her campaign platform.

The bill is one of two recent pieces of health care legislation sponsored by Rep. Coleman during the regular legislative session that passed; each aimed at helping to better ensure the health care needs of all citizens are met. Governor Bob Riley also signed into law Rep. Coleman's bill allowing all funds generated by Cooper Green Mercy Hospital to be retained by the hospital's general fund and to be expended as budgeted by the hospital. Before the law was enacted, all revenue above and over the budget was sent to the Jefferson County General Fund and used for other county operations.

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