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21st Century Healthcare Reform

One of my top priorities in Jefferson City is to work on meaningful healthcare reform. Specifically, my goal is to make healthcare in Missouri more available, affordable, and portable. This week, I was appointed as the chair of the Missouri Senate Healthy Missourians 2020 Committee, which is charged with creating a comprehensive, long-term plan for Missouri's healthcare future. This week, I also filed legislation that will help reform healthcare in our state.

In order to reduce state-sponsored healthcare costs, we must weed out waste, fraud and abuse in the system, as well as work to make the system more transparent. To that end, I filed [Senate Bill 549](#) this week to create an internet database of MoHealthNet (our state's Medicaid program) disbursements. The database would protect the privacy of MoHealthNet recipients' information and it would provide much needed transparency to track claims and payments making it easier to spot instances of fraud. This sort of watchdog measure is an important part of my plan to reform our system because, by creating this online database, we can save real dollars.

Another bill I filed this week will empower those with disabilities who receive Medicaid to continue or begin gainful employment. Janet Gillow, the Advocacy Senior Manager for the Gateway Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, encouraged us to file the legislation. [Senate Bill 546](#) changes Ticket to Work, a program designed to remove barriers that would otherwise keep people with disabilities from choosing to work for fear of losing health care coverage. Currently, to determine income for eligibility under the program, the

first \$50 of Social Security Disability payments is disregarded. This bill increases the amount to the first \$250, so that individuals with disabilities who want to work but do not want to lose their coverage can continue to work and take pride in their employment while contributing much needed tax dollars to the state.

I also introduced [SB 548](#), which will improve the availability of health information by allowing healthcare providers to access a database of health information called a Health Bank. The system would include a secure, web-based health information infrastructure for the sharing of electronic health information among health care facilities, health care professionals, public and private payers, and patients. This will cut down on errors made because of a lack of access to current health records and allow providers to stay better informed on the Missourians they are treating. The legislation specifically states that the database will adhere to all the current standards in place that protect patients' privacy. Plus, individuals can access information online about their health which will empower us, the consumer, with more information about our health.

This was the last week to file legislation in the Senate, so much of my focus will now shift from crafting meaningful legislation to progressing on the passage of the bills I have filed to improve our state. I will continue to let you know about the progress of these bills, as well as other measures that will help you.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns. Please feel free to contact me using the information below. If you would like to begin receiving this column regularly, click on the subscribe link on the bottom of the page.

Thank you,
Senator Eric Schmitt

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