

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5802

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long Term Care, January 25, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to providing flexibility in calculation of nursing rates for the purposes of implementing new centers for medicare and medicaid services data.

**Brief Description:** Providing flexibility in calculation of nursing rates.

**Sponsors:** Senators Muzzall, Hasegawa, Lovelett, Nobles, Rivers and Robinson; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long Term Care: 1/16/24, 1/25/24 [DP-WM].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires Department of Social and Health Services to employ a method for applying case mix adjustments to the direct care component of the Medicaid Skilled Nursing Facility rate.
- Removes provisions on the Resource Utilization Group (RUG) and how the RUG scores data is used for calculating the case mix adjustments.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Cleveland, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Rivers, Ranking Member; Muzzall, Assistant Ranking Member; Conway, Dhingra, Holy, Padden, Randall and Van De Wege.

**Staff:** Julie Tran (786-7283)

**Background:** Individuals receiving Medicaid funded long-term services and supports may

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choose to receive services in their home, in an adult day center, in an adult family home, in an assisted living facility, or in a skilled nursing facility (SNF). SNFs are licensed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and provide 24-hour supervised nursing care, personal care, therapies, nutrition management, organized activities, social services, laundry services, and room and board to three or more residents.

Skilled Nursing Facility Medicaid Rate Methodology. The Medicaid SNF payment methodology is administered by DSHS. The Medicaid rates in Washington are unique to each facility and reflect the client acuity of each SNF's residents. The methodology for SNF payment rates consists of four primary components: direct care, indirect care, capital, and quality incentive. The direct care component includes nursing and related care provided to residents, such as food, laundry, and dietary services.

Currently, the rate's direct care component is adjusted every six months to ensure the direct care rates reflect the high-acuity residents for whom the facilities are providing services.

Case Mix for Washington State Medicaid Nursing Home Payment. Case mix describes differences in residents within a population in terms of their physical and mental conditions and the resources used in their care. Case mix reimbursement systems measure the intensity of care and services required for each resident and translate those measures into groupings. Those groupings are used in the calculation of facility payment to adjust the direct care rates. Washington State and DSHS received the data from federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) through Resource Utilization Group (RUG) scores. Current state law requires DSHS use RUG to calculate the nursing facility rates.

In 2019 CMS transitioned to a new case-mix classification data model called the Patient Driven Payment Model (PDPM) but continued to support the RUG data model. PDPM data focuses on characteristics, needs, and goals of the residents whereas the RUG data model focuses on the volume of therapy provided.

On September 30, 2023, CMS discontinued support for RUG categorization for nursing facility residents and fully transitioned to PDPM.

**Summary of Bill:** DSHS is required to employ a method for applying case mix to the direct care component of the Medicaid SNF rate which should be informed by a minimum data set data collected by CMS. DSHS is required to develop and implement rules to outline what data is used and how it is implemented in the calculation of the direct care component of the Medicaid SNF rate. The case mix is required to be based on the finalized case mix weights as published by CMS in the federal register.

References to resource utilization groups are removed from statute. This includes language associated with RUGs and provisions that specify how RUG scores are used for the calculations in the case mix adjustments.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill allows Washington to continue basing nursing home payments on resident acuity. The data used to weight payments for acuity has been discontinued and the state no longer has acuity data to set rates unless it adopts a new data source for the payment system. The first time DSHS will set rates without available RUG data will be July 1, 2024. This bill removes references to RUG and allows DSHS flexibility in setting rates while also adjusting those rates for the acuity of the clients in facilities. Action is urgently needed to provide DSHS the authority to make the switch to a new data source.

If this bill does not pass, significant adjustments must be made and it could result in a case mix freeze that would discourage the acceptance of higher acuity residents and risk undoing the progress the state has made in addressing the difficult to discharge hospital patients. This bill is not perfect but it is supported by SNFs and is headed in the direction the state needs to go. There is a need for a phased approach because a full implementation with no adjustments to PDPM may mean significant rate increases for most facilities and also, significant decreases in rates for other facilities. This bill has flexibility and will allow the DSHS to continue setting Medicaid rates on July 1, 2024, without significant impact to the rates. The value of a society is how they treat their youth and their elderly. This is a methodology to increase those rates to provide care for those who need it the most.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Ron Muzzall, Prime Sponsor; Peter Graham, DSHS/AL TSA; Alyssa Odegaard, LeadingAge Washington.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.