

~~SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall apply to health benefit plans subject to this Act that are issued, delivered, or renewed in the State on or after October 1, 2004.~~

(a) The Maryland Health Care Commission and the Maryland Insurance Administration shall conduct a study of the affordability of private health insurance in Maryland.

(b) The Maryland Insurance Administration, in consultation with the Maryland Health Care Commission, shall study:

(1) the number of, and the regulatory requirements, including rating of health status, relating to health insurance carriers in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia; and

(2) the role of tax-deferred health savings accounts and other models of offering health insurance coverage designed to increase consumer awareness of the cost of health care services.

(c) The Maryland Health Care Commission shall study:

(1) the factors that contribute to increases in health care costs in Maryland, including utilization of health care services;

(2) ways to educate consumers about health care issues and promote personal accountability in health care;

(3) ways in which disease management programs can promote the appropriate management of chronic diseases;

(4) ways to encourage strategies to purchase health care that focus on quality, patient safety, and wellness;

(5) ways to facilitate a more effective and efficient health care delivery system, including improved information technology and evidence-based medicine;

(6) innovative programs in other states designed to encourage the appropriate use of health care services; and

(7) ways to make health insurance more understandable to both employers and consumers.

(d) Based on the studies conducted under subsections (a) through (c) of this section, the Maryland Health Commission and the Maryland Insurance Administration shall develop recommendations on ways to make private health insurance more affordable for Maryland residents.

(e) The Maryland Health Commission and the Maryland Insurance Administration, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, shall submit to the General Assembly the following reports on their findings and recommendations:

(1) an interim report on or before January 1, 2005; and