

STATE OF NEW YORK

6027

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

March 30, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. PAULIN, SEAWRIGHT, REYES, RAMOS, SIMON, EPSTEIN, BICHOTTE HERMELYN, STECK, MITAYNES, McDONOUGH, L. ROSENTHAL, BENEDETTO, FORREST, BURGOS, GONZALEZ-ROJAS, RIVERA, GIBBS, KELLES, THIELE, ZINERMAN, DE LOS SANTOS, JACKSON, JEAN-PIERRE -- read once and referred to the Committee on Health

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to the general hospital indigent care pool; and to repeal certain provisions of such law relating thereto

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Subdivision 9 of section 2807-k of the public health law,
2 as amended by section 17 of part B of chapter 60 of the laws of 2014, is
3 amended to read as follows:

4 9. In order for a general hospital to participate in the distribution
5 of funds from the pool, the general hospital must [~~implement minimum~~
6 ~~collection policies and procedures approved~~] use only the uniform finan-
7 cial assistance policy and form provided by the commissioner.

8 § 2. Subdivision 9-a of section 2807-k of the public health law, as
9 added by section 39-a of part A of chapter 57 of the laws of 2006, para-
10 graph (k) as added by section 43 of part B of chapter 58 of the laws of
11 2008, is amended to read as follows:

12 9-a. (a) (i) As a condition for participation in pool distributions
13 authorized pursuant to this section and section twenty-eight hundred
14 seven-w of this article for periods on and after January first, two
15 thousand nine, general hospitals shall, effective for periods on and
16 after January first, two thousand seven, establish financial [~~aid~~]
17 assistance policies and procedures, in accordance with the provisions of
18 this subdivision, for reducing hospital charges otherwise applicable to
19 low-income individuals without third-party health [~~insurance~~] coverage,
20 or who have [~~exhausted their~~] third-party health [~~insurance benefits~~]
21 coverage that does not cover or limits coverage of the service, and who

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 can demonstrate an inability to pay full charges, and also, at the
2 hospital's discretion, for reducing or discounting the collection of
3 co-pays and deductible payments from those individuals who can demon-
4 strate an inability to pay such amounts. Immigration status shall not be
5 an eligibility criterion for the purpose of determining financial
6 assistance under this section.

7 (ii) A general hospital may use the New York state of health market-
8 place eligibility determination page to establish the patient's house-
9 hold income and residency in lieu of the financial application form,
10 provided it has secured the consent of the patient. A general hospital
11 shall not require a patient to apply for coverage through the New York
12 state of health marketplace in order to receive care or financial
13 assistance.

14 (iii) Upon submission of a completed application form, the patient is
15 not liable for any bills until the general hospital has rendered a deci-
16 sion on the application in accordance with this subdivision.

17 (b) [~~Such~~] The reductions from charges for [~~uninsured~~] patients
18 described in paragraph (a) of this subdivision with incomes below [~~at~~
19 ~~least three~~] six hundred percent of the federal poverty level shall
20 result in a charge to such individuals that does not exceed [~~the greater~~
21 ~~of~~] the amount that would have been paid for the same services [~~by the~~
22 ~~"highest volume payer" for such general hospital as defined in subpara-~~
23 ~~graph (v) of this paragraph, or for services provided pursuant to title~~
24 ~~XVIII of the federal social security act (medicare), or for services~~]
25 provided pursuant to title [~~XIX~~] XVIII of the federal social security
26 act [~~(medicaid)~~] (medicare), and provided further that such [~~amounts~~]
27 amount shall be adjusted according to income level as follows:

28 (i) For patients with incomes at or below [~~at least one~~] two hundred
29 percent of the federal poverty level, the hospital shall collect no more
30 than a nominal payment amount, consistent with guidelines established by
31 the commissioner[~~†~~].

32 (ii) For patients with incomes [~~between at least one~~] above two
33 hundred [~~one~~] percent and [~~one~~] up to four hundred [~~fifty~~] percent of
34 the federal poverty level, the hospital shall collect no more than the
35 amount identified after application of a proportional sliding fee sched-
36 ule under which patients with lower incomes shall pay the lowest amount.
37 [~~Such~~] The schedule shall provide that the amount the hospital may
38 collect for [~~such patients~~] the patient increases from the nominal
39 amount described in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph in equal incre-
40 ments as the income of the patient increases, up to a maximum of twenty
41 percent of the [~~greater of the~~] amount that would have been paid for the
42 same services [~~by the "highest volume payer" for such general hospital,~~
43 ~~as defined in subparagraph (v) of this paragraph, or for services~~
44 ~~provided pursuant to title XVIII of the federal social security act~~
45 ~~(medicare) or for services~~] provided pursuant to title [~~XIX~~] XVIII of
46 the federal social security act [~~(medicaid)~~], (medicare).

47 (iii) [~~For patients with incomes between at least one hundred fifty-~~
48 ~~one percent and two hundred fifty percent of the federal poverty level,~~
49 ~~the hospital shall collect no more than the amount identified after~~
50 ~~application of a proportional sliding fee schedule under which patients~~
51 ~~with lower income shall pay the lowest amounts. Such schedule shall~~
52 ~~provide that the amount the hospital may collect for such patients~~
53 ~~increases from the twenty percent figure described in subparagraph (ii)~~
54 ~~of this paragraph in equal increments as the income of the patient~~
55 ~~increases, up to a maximum of the greater of the amount that would have~~
56 ~~been paid for the same services by the "highest volume payer" for such~~

~~1 general hospital, as defined in subparagraph (v) of this paragraph, or~~
~~2 for services provided pursuant to title XVIII of the federal social~~
~~3 security act (medicare) or for services provided pursuant to title XIX~~
~~4 of the federal social security act (medicaid); and~~

~~5 (iv)] For patients with incomes [between at least two hundred fifty-~~
~~6 one percent and three hundred] above four hundred percent and up to six~~
~~7 hundred percent of the federal poverty level, the hospital shall collect~~
~~8 no more than the [greater of the] amount that would have been paid for~~
~~9 the same services [by the "highest volume payer" for such general hospi-~~
~~10 tal as defined in subparagraph (v) of this paragraph, or for services~~
~~11 provided pursuant to title XVIII of the federal social security act~~
~~12 (medicare), or for services] provided pursuant to title [XIX] XVIII~~
~~13 of the federal social security act [(medicaid)] (medicare).~~

~~14 [(v) For the purposes of this paragraph, "highest volume payer" shall~~
~~15 mean the insurer, corporation or organization licensed, organized or~~
~~16 certified pursuant to article thirty two, forty two or forty three of~~
~~17 the insurance law or article forty four of this chapter, or other third-~~
~~18 party payer, which has a contract or agreement to pay claims for~~
~~19 services provided by the general hospital and incurred the highest~~
~~20 volume of claims in the previous calendar year.~~

~~21 (vi) A hospital may implement policies and procedures to permit, but~~
~~22 not require, consideration on a case by case basis of exceptions to the~~
~~23 requirements described in subparagraphs (i) and (ii) of this paragraph~~
~~24 based upon the existence of significant assets owned by the patient that~~
~~25 should be taken into account in determining the appropriate payment~~
~~26 amount for that patient's care, provided, however, that such proposed~~
~~27 policies and procedures shall be subject to the prior review and~~
~~28 approval of the commissioner and, if approved, shall be included in the~~
~~29 hospital's financial assistance policy established pursuant to this~~
~~30 section, and provided further that, if such approval is granted, the~~
~~31 maximum amount that may be collected shall not exceed the greater of the~~
~~32 amount that would have been paid for the same services by the "highest~~
~~33 volume payer" for such general hospital as defined in subparagraph (v)~~
~~34 of this paragraph, or for services provided pursuant to title XVIII of~~
~~35 the federal social security act (medicare), or for services provided~~
~~36 pursuant to title XIX of the federal social security act (medicaid). In~~
~~37 the event that a general hospital reviews a patient's assets in deter-~~
~~38 mining payment adjustments such policies and procedures shall not~~
~~39 consider as assets a patient's primary residence, assets held in a tax-~~
~~40 deferred or comparable retirement savings account, college savings~~
~~41 accounts, or cars used regularly by a patient or immediate family~~
~~42 members.~~

~~43 (vii)] (c) Nothing in this [paragraph] subdivision shall be construed~~
~~44 to limit a hospital's ability to establish patient eligibility for~~
~~45 payment discounts at income levels higher than those specified herein~~
~~46 and/or to provide greater payment discounts for eligible patients than~~
~~47 those required by this [paragraph] subdivision.~~

~~48 [(e)] (d) Such policies and procedures shall be clear, understandable,~~
~~49 in writing and publicly available in summary form and each general~~
~~50 hospital participating in the pool shall ensure that every patient is~~
~~51 made aware of the existence of [such] the policies and procedures and is~~
~~52 provided, in a timely manner, with a summary and a copy of [such poli-~~
~~53 cies and procedures] the policy and form upon request. Any summary~~
~~54 provided to patients shall, at a minimum, include specific information~~
~~55 as to income levels used to determine eligibility for assistance, a~~
~~56 description of the primary service area of the hospital and the means of~~

1 applying for assistance. [~~For general hospitals with twenty-four hour~~
2 ~~emergency departments, such policies and procedures~~] A general hospital
3 shall [~~require the notification of patients~~] notify patients by provid-
4 ing written materials to patients or their authorized representatives
5 during the intake and registration process, through the conspicuous
6 posting of language-appropriate information in the general hospital, and
7 by including information on bills and statements sent to patients, that
8 financial [~~aid~~] assistance may be available to qualified patients and
9 how to obtain further information. [~~For specialty hospitals without~~
10 ~~twenty-four hour emergency departments, such notification shall take~~
11 ~~place through written materials provided to patients during the intake~~
12 ~~and registration process prior to the provision of any health care~~
13 ~~services or procedures, and through information on bills and statements~~
14 ~~sent to patients, that financial aid may be available to qualified~~
15 ~~patients and how to obtain further information. Application materials~~
16 ~~shall include a notice to patients that upon submission of a completed~~
17 ~~application, including any information or documentation needed to deter-~~
18 ~~mine the patient's eligibility pursuant to the hospital's financial~~
19 ~~assistance policy, the patient may disregard any bills until the hospi-~~
20 ~~tal has rendered a decision on the application in accordance with this~~
21 ~~paragraph~~] General hospitals shall post the financial assistance appli-
22 cation policy, procedures and form, and a summary of the policy and
23 procedures, in a conspicuous location and downloadable form on the
24 general hospital's website.

25 [~~(d) Such~~] (e) The hospital's application materials shall include a
26 notice to patients that upon submission of a completed application form,
27 the patient shall not be liable for any bills until the general hospital
28 has rendered a decision on the application in accordance with this
29 subdivision. The application materials shall include specific informa-
30 tion as the income levels used to determine eligibility for financial
31 assistance, a description of the primary service area of the hospital
32 and the means to apply for assistance. Nothing in this subdivision shall
33 be construed as precluding the use of presumptive eligibility determi-
34 nations by hospitals on behalf of patients. The policies and procedures
35 shall include clear, objective criteria for determining a patient's
36 ability to pay and for providing such adjustments to payment require-
37 ments as are necessary. In addition to adjustment mechanisms such as
38 sliding fee schedules and discounts to fixed standards, such policies
39 and procedures shall also provide for the use of installment plans for
40 the payment of outstanding balances by patients pursuant to the
41 provisions of the hospital's financial assistance policy. The monthly
42 payment under such a plan shall not exceed [~~ten~~] five percent of the
43 gross monthly income of the patient[, ~~provided, however, that if patient~~
44 ~~assets are considered under such a policy, then patient assets which are~~
45 ~~not excluded assets pursuant to subparagraph (vi) of paragraph (b) of~~
46 ~~this subdivision may be considered in addition to the limit on monthly~~
47 ~~payments~~]. Installment plan payments may not be required to begin before
48 one hundred eighty days after the date of the service or discharge,
49 whichever is later. The policy shall allow the patient and the hospital
50 to mutually agree to modify the terms of an installment plan. The rate
51 of interest charged to the patient on the unpaid balance, if any, shall
52 not exceed [~~the rate for a ninety day security issued by the United~~
53 ~~States Department of Treasury, plus .5 percent~~] two percentum per annum
54 and no plan shall include an accelerator or similar clause under which a
55 higher rate of interest is triggered upon a missed payment. [~~If such~~]
56 The policies and procedures shall not include a requirement of a deposit

1 prior to [~~non-emergent,~~] medically-necessary care[~~, such deposit must be~~
2 ~~included as part of any financial aid consideration~~]. The hospital
3 shall refund any payments made by the patient before the determination
4 of eligibility for financial assistance that exceeds the patient's
5 liability after discounts are applied. Such policies and procedures
6 shall be applied consistently to all eligible patients.

7 [~~(e) Such policies and procedures shall permit patients to~~] (f) In any
8 legal action by or on behalf of a hospital to collect a medical debt,
9 the complaint shall be accompanied by an affidavit by the hospital's
10 chief financial officer stating that on information and belief the
11 patient does not meet the income or residency criteria for financial
12 assistance. Patients may apply for financial assistance [within at least
13 ~~ninety days of the date of discharge or date of service and provide at~~
14 ~~least twenty days for patients to submit a completed application]~~ at any
15 time during the collection process, including after the commencement of
16 a medical debt court action or upon the plaintiff obtaining a default
17 judgment. A hospital may use credit scoring software for the purposes of
18 establishing income eligibility and approving financial assistance, but
19 only if the hospital makes clear to the patient that providing a social
20 security number is not mandatory and the scoring does not negatively
21 impact the patient's credit score. However, credit scoring software
22 shall not be solely relied upon by the hospital in denying a patient's
23 application for financial assistance. [~~Such~~] The policies and proce-
24 dures [~~may require that~~] shall allow patients seeking [~~payment adjust-~~
25 ~~ments~~] financial assistance to provide [~~appropriate~~] the following
26 financial information and documentation in support of their applica-
27 tion[~~, provided, however, that such application process shall not be~~
28 ~~unduly burdensome or complex~~]: pay checks or pay stubs; unemployment
29 documentation; social security income; rent receipts; a letter from the
30 patient's employer attesting to the patient's gross income; or, if none
31 of the aforementioned information and documentation are available, a
32 written self-attestation of the patient's income may be used. General
33 hospitals shall, upon request, assist patients in understanding the
34 hospital's application and form, policies and procedures and in applying
35 for payment adjustments. Application forms shall be printed and posted
36 to its website in the "primary languages" of patients served by the
37 general hospital. For the purposes of this paragraph, "primary
38 languages" shall include any language that is either (i) used to commu-
39 nicate, during at least five percent of patient visits in a year, by
40 patients who cannot speak, read, write or understand the English
41 language at the level of proficiency necessary for effective communi-
42 cation with health care providers, or (ii) spoken by non-English speak-
43 ing individuals comprising more than one percent of the primary hospital
44 service area population, as calculated using demographic information
45 available from the United States Bureau of the Census, supplemented by
46 data from school systems. Decisions regarding such applications shall be
47 made within thirty days of receipt of a completed application. [~~Such~~]
48 The policies and procedures shall require that the hospital issue any
49 [~~denial/approval~~] denial or approval of [~~such~~] the application in writ-
50 ing with information on how to appeal the denial and shall require the
51 hospital to establish an appeals process under which it will evaluate
52 the denial of an application. [~~Nothing in this subdivision shall be~~
53 ~~interpreted as prohibiting a hospital from making the availability of~~
54 ~~financial assistance contingent upon the patient first applying for~~
55 ~~coverage under title XIX of the social security act (medicaid) or another~~
56 ~~insurance program if, in the judgment of the hospital, the patient~~

1 ~~may be eligible for medicaid or another insurance program, and upon the~~
2 ~~patient's cooperation in following the hospital's financial assistance~~
3 ~~application requirements, including the provision of information needed~~
4 ~~to make a determination on the patient's application in accordance with~~
5 ~~the hospital's financial assistance policy]~~ The hospital shall inform
6 patients on how to file a complaint against the hospital or a debt
7 collector that is contracted on behalf of the hospital regarding the
8 patient's bill.

9 [~~(f)~~ ~~Such~~] (g) The policies and procedures shall provide that patients
10 with incomes below [~~three~~] six hundred percent of the federal poverty
11 level are deemed [~~presumptively~~] eligible for payment adjustments and
12 shall conform to the requirements set forth in paragraph (b) of this
13 subdivision, provided, however, that nothing in this subdivision shall
14 be interpreted as precluding hospitals from extending such payment
15 adjustments to other patients, either generally or on a case-by-case
16 basis. [~~Such~~] The policies and procedures shall provide financial [~~aid~~]
17 assistance for emergency hospital services, including emergency trans-
18 fers pursuant to the federal emergency medical treatment and active
19 labor act (42 USC 1395dd), to patients who reside in New York state and
20 for medically necessary hospital services for patients who reside in the
21 hospital's primary service area as determined according to criteria
22 established by the commissioner. In developing [~~such~~] the criteria, the
23 commissioner shall consult with representatives of the hospital indus-
24 try, health care consumer advocates and local public health officials.
25 [~~Such~~] The criteria shall be made available to the public no less than
26 thirty days prior to the date of implementation and shall, at a minimum:

27 (i) prohibit a hospital from developing or altering its primary
28 service area in a manner designed to avoid medically underserved commu-
29 nities or communities with high percentages of uninsured residents;

30 (ii) ensure that every geographic area of the state is included in at
31 least one general hospital's primary service area so that eligible
32 patients may access care and financial assistance; and

33 (iii) require the hospital to notify the commissioner upon making any
34 change to its primary service area, and to include a description of its
35 primary service area in the hospital's annual implementation report
36 filed pursuant to subdivision three of section twenty-eight hundred
37 three-1 of this article.

38 [~~(g)~~] (h) Nothing in this subdivision shall be interpreted as preclud-
39 ing hospitals from extending payment adjustments for medically necessary
40 non-emergency hospital services to patients outside of the hospital's
41 primary service area. For patients determined to be eligible for finan-
42 cial [~~aid~~] assistance under the terms of a hospital's financial [~~aid~~]
43 assistance policy, [~~such~~] the policies and procedures shall prohibit any
44 limitations on financial [~~aid~~] assistance for services based on the
45 medical condition of the applicant, other than typical limitations or
46 exclusions based on medical necessity or the clinical or therapeutic
47 benefit of a procedure or treatment.

48 [~~(h)~~ ~~Such policies and procedures shall not permit the forced~~] (i) A
49 hospital or its agent shall not issue, authorize or permit an income
50 execution of a patient's wages, secure a lien or force a sale or fore-
51 closure of a patient's primary residence in order to collect an
52 outstanding medical bill and shall [~~require the hospital to refrain from~~
53 ~~sending~~] not send an account to collection if the patient has submitted
54 a completed application for financial [~~aid, including any required~~
55 ~~supporting documentation~~] assistance, while the hospital determines the
56 patient's eligibility for [~~such aid~~] financial assistance. [~~Such~~] The

1 policies and procedures shall provide for written notification, which
2 shall include notification on a patient bill, to a patient not less than
3 thirty days prior to the referral of debts for collection and shall
4 require that the collection agency obtain the hospital's written consent
5 prior to commencing a legal action. [~~Such~~] The policies and procedures
6 shall require all general hospital staff who interact with patients or
7 have responsibility for billing and collections to be trained in [~~such~~]
8 the policies and procedures, and require the implementation of a mech-
9 anism for the general hospital to measure its compliance with [~~such~~] the
10 policies and procedures. [~~Such~~] The policies and procedures shall
11 require that any collection agency, lawyer or firm under contract with a
12 general hospital for the collection of debts follow the hospital's
13 financial assistance policy, including providing information to patients
14 on how to apply for financial assistance where appropriate. [~~Such~~] The
15 policies and procedures shall prohibit collections from a patient who is
16 determined to be eligible for medical assistance [~~pursuant to title XIX~~
17 ~~of the federal social security act~~] under title eleven of article five
18 of the social services law at the time services were rendered and for
19 which services medicaid payment is available.

20 [~~(i)~~] (j) Reports required to be submitted to the department by each
21 general hospital as a condition for participation in the pools[~~, and~~
22 ~~which contain, in accordance with applicable regulations,~~] shall
23 contain: (i) a certification from an independent certified public
24 accountant or independent licensed public accountant or an attestation
25 from a senior official of the hospital that the hospital is in compli-
26 ance with conditions of participation in the pools[~~, shall also contain,~~
27 ~~for reporting periods on and after January first, two thousand seven.~~];

28 [~~(i)~~] (ii) a report on hospital costs incurred and uncollected amounts
29 in providing services to [~~eligible~~] patients [~~without insurance~~] found
30 eligible for financial assistance, including the amount of care provided
31 for a nominal payment amount, during the period covered by the report;

32 [~~(ii)~~] (iii) hospital costs incurred and uncollected amounts for
33 deductibles and coinsurance for eligible patients with insurance or
34 other third-party payor coverage;

35 [~~(iii)~~] (iv) the number of patients, organized according to United
36 States postal service zip code, race, ethnicity and gender, who applied
37 for financial assistance [~~pursuant to~~] under the hospital's financial
38 assistance policy, and the number, organized according to United States
39 postal service zip code, race, ethnicity and gender, whose applications
40 were approved and whose applications were denied;

41 [~~(iv)~~] (v) the reimbursement received for indigent care from the pool
42 established [~~pursuant to~~] under this section;

43 [~~(v)~~] (vi) the amount of funds that have been expended on [~~charity~~
44 ~~care~~] financial assistance from charitable bequests made or trusts
45 established for the purpose of providing financial assistance to
46 patients who are eligible in accordance with the terms of [~~such~~] the
47 bequests or trusts;

48 [~~(vi)~~] (vii) for hospitals located in social services districts in
49 which the district allows hospitals to assist patients with such appli-
50 cations, the number of applications for eligibility for medicaid under
51 title [~~XIX of the social security act (medicaid)~~] eleven of article five
52 of the social services law that the hospital assisted patients in
53 completing and the number denied and approved;

54 [~~(vii)~~] (viii) the hospital's financial losses resulting from services
55 provided under medicaid; and

1 [~~(viii)~~] (ix) the number of referrals to collection agents or
2 contracted external collection vendors, court cases and liens placed on
3 [~~the primary~~] any residences of patients through the collection process
4 used by a hospital.

5 [~~(j)~~] (k) Within ninety days of the effective date of the chapter of
6 the laws of two thousand twenty-three which amended this subdivision
7 each hospital shall submit to the commissioner a written report on its
8 policies and procedures for financial assistance to patients which are
9 used by the hospital [~~on the~~] as of such effective date [~~of this subdivi-~~
10 ~~vision~~]. Such report shall include copies of its policies and proce-
11 dures, including material which is distributed to patients, and a
12 description of the hospital's financial aid policies and procedures.
13 Such description shall include the income levels of patients on which
14 eligibility is based, the financial aid eligible patients receive and
15 the means of calculating such aid, and the service area, if any, used by
16 the hospital to determine eligibility.

17 [~~(k)~~] (l) The commissioner shall include the data collected under
18 paragraph (j) of this subdivision in regular audits of the annual gener-
19 al hospital institutional cost report.

20 (m) In the event [~~it is determined by the commissioner that~~] the state
21 [~~will be~~] is unable to secure all necessary federal approvals to
22 include, as part of the state's approved state plan under title nineteen
23 of the federal social security act, a requirement[~~, as set forth in~~
24 ~~paragraph one of this subdivision,~~] that compliance with this subdivi-
25 sion is a condition of participation in pool distributions authorized
26 pursuant to this section and section twenty-eight hundred seven-w of
27 this article, then such condition of participation shall be deemed null
28 and void [~~and, notwithstanding~~]. Notwithstanding section twelve of this
29 chapter, failure to comply with [~~the provisions of~~] this subdivision by
30 a general hospital [~~on and after the date of such determination~~] shall
31 make [~~such~~] the hospital liable for a civil penalty not to exceed ten
32 thousand dollars for each [~~such~~] violation. The imposition of [~~such~~] the
33 civil penalties shall be subject to [~~the provisions of~~] section twelve-a
34 of this chapter.

35 (n) A hospital or its collection agents shall not report adverse
36 information about a patient to a consumer or financial reporting entity,
37 or commence civil action against a patient or delegate a collection
38 activity to a debt collector for nonpayment for one hundred eighty days
39 after the first post-service bill is issued; and a hospital shall not
40 report adverse information to a consumer reporting agency, or commence a
41 civil action against a patient or delegate a collection activity to a
42 debt collector, if: the hospital was notified that an appeal or a review
43 of a health insurance decision is pending within the immediately preced-
44 ing sixty days; or the patient has a pending application for or quali-
45 fied for financial assistance. A hospital shall report the fulfillment
46 of a patient's payment obligation within thirty days after the obli-
47 gation is fulfilled to a consumer or financial reporting entity to which
48 the hospital had reported adverse information about the patient.

49 § 3. Subdivision 9-a of section 2807-k of the public health law as
50 amended by section two of this act, is amended to read as follows:

51 9-a. (a) (i) As a condition for participation in pool distributions
52 authorized pursuant to this section and section twenty-eight hundred
53 seven-w of this article for periods on and after January first, two
54 thousand nine, general hospitals shall, effective for periods on and
55 after January first, two thousand [~~seven, establish~~] twenty-five, adopt
56 and implement the uniform financial assistance [~~policies and procedures,~~

1 ~~in accordance with the provisions of this subdivision,~~ form and policy,
2 to be developed and issued by the commissioner. General hospitals shall
3 implement the uniform policy and form for reducing hospital charges and
4 charges for affiliated providers otherwise applicable to low-income
5 individuals without third-party health coverage, or who have third-party
6 health coverage that does not cover or limits coverage of the service,
7 and who can demonstrate an inability to pay full charges, and also, at
8 the hospital's discretion, for reducing or discounting the collection of
9 co-pays and deductible payments from those individuals who can demon-
10 strate an inability to pay such amounts. Immigration status shall not be
11 an eligibility criterion for the purpose of determining financial
12 assistance under this section. As used in this section, "affiliated
13 provider" means a provider that is: (A) employed by the hospital; (B)
14 under a professional services agreement with the hospital; or (C) a
15 clinical faculty member of a medical school or other school that trains
16 individuals to be providers and that is affiliated with the hospital or
17 health system.

18 (ii) A general hospital may use the New York state of health market-
19 place eligibility determination page to establish the patient's house-
20 hold income and residency in lieu of the financial application form,
21 provided it has secured the consent of the patient. A general hospital
22 shall not require a patient to apply for coverage through the New York
23 state of health marketplace in order to receive care or financial
24 assistance.

25 (iii) Upon submission of a completed application form, the patient is
26 not liable for any bills until the general hospital has rendered a deci-
27 sion on the application in accordance with this subdivision.

28 (b) The reductions from charges for patients described in paragraph
29 (a) of this subdivision with incomes below six hundred percent of the
30 federal poverty level shall result in a charge to such individuals that
31 does not exceed the amount that would have been paid for the same
32 services provided pursuant to title XVIII of the federal social security
33 act (medicare), and provided further that such amount shall be adjusted
34 according to income level as follows:

35 (i) For patients with incomes at or below two hundred percent of the
36 federal poverty level, the hospital shall collect no more than a nominal
37 payment amount, consistent with guidelines established by the commis-
38 sioner.

39 (ii) For patients with incomes above two hundred percent and up to
40 four hundred percent of the federal poverty level, the hospital shall
41 collect no more than the amount identified after application of a
42 proportional sliding fee schedule under which patients with lower
43 incomes shall pay the lowest amount. The schedule shall provide that the
44 amount the hospital may collect for the patient increases from the nomi-
45 nal amount described in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph in equal
46 increments as the income of the patient increases, up to a maximum of
47 twenty percent of the amount that would have been paid for the same
48 services provided pursuant to title XVIII of the federal social security
49 act (medicare).

50 (iii) For patients with incomes above four hundred percent and up to
51 six hundred percent of the federal poverty level, the hospital shall
52 collect no more than the amount that would have been paid for the same
53 services provided pursuant to title XVIII of the federal social security
54 act (medicare).

55 (c) Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to limit a hospi-
56 tal's ability to establish patient eligibility for payment discounts at

1 income levels higher than those specified herein and/or to provide
2 greater payment discounts for eligible patients than those required by
3 this subdivision.

4 ~~(d) [Such policies and procedures shall be clear, understandable, in~~
5 ~~writing and publicly available in summary form and each] Each~~ general
6 hospital participating in the pool shall ensure that every patient is
7 made aware of the existence of ~~[the policies and procedures]~~ the uniform
8 financial assistance form and policy and is provided, in a timely
9 manner, with ~~[a summary and]~~ a copy of the policy and form upon request.
10 ~~[Any summary provided to patients shall, at a minimum, include specific~~
11 ~~information as to income levels used to determine eligibility for~~
12 ~~assistance, a description of the primary service area of the hospital~~
13 ~~and the means of applying for assistance.]~~ A general hospital shall
14 notify patients by providing written materials to patients or their
15 authorized representatives during the intake and registration process,
16 through the conspicuous posting of language-appropriate information in
17 the general hospital, and by including information on bills and state-
18 ments sent to patients, that financial assistance may be available to
19 qualified patients and how to obtain further information. General hospi-
20 tals shall post the uniform financial assistance application policy~~[,~~
21 ~~procedures]~~ and form, and a summary of the policy ~~[and procedures]~~, in a
22 conspicuous location and downloadable form on the general hospital's
23 website. The commissioner shall post the uniform financial assistance
24 form and policy in downloadable form on the department's hospital
25 profile page or any successor website.

26 (e) The ~~[hospital's]~~ commissioner shall provide application materials
27 to general hospitals, including the uniform financial assistance appli-
28 cation form and policy. These application materials shall include a
29 notice to patients that upon submission of a completed application form,
30 the patient shall not be liable for any bills until the general hospital
31 has rendered a decision on the application in accordance with this
32 subdivision. The application materials shall include specific informa-
33 tion as the income levels used to determine eligibility for financial
34 assistance, a description of the primary service area of the hospital
35 and the means to apply for assistance. Nothing in this subdivision shall
36 be construed as precluding the use of presumptive eligibility determi-
37 nations by hospitals on behalf of patients. The ~~[policies and proce-~~
38 ~~dures]~~ uniform application form and policy shall include clear, objec-
39 tive criteria for determining a patient's ability to pay and for
40 providing such adjustments to payment requirements as are necessary. In
41 addition to adjustment mechanisms such as sliding fee schedules and
42 discounts to fixed standards, ~~[such policies and procedures]~~ the uniform
43 policy shall also provide for the use of installment plans for the
44 payment of outstanding balances by patients ~~[pursuant to the provisions~~
45 ~~of the hospital's financial assistance policy]~~. The monthly payment
46 under such a plan shall not exceed five percent of the gross monthly
47 income of the patient. Installment plan payments may not be required to
48 begin before one hundred eighty days after the date of the service or
49 discharge, whichever is later. The policy shall allow the patient and
50 the hospital to mutually agree to modify the terms of an installment
51 plan. The rate of interest charged to the patient on the unpaid
52 balance, if any, shall not exceed two percentum per annum and no plan
53 shall include an accelerator or similar clause under which a higher rate
54 of interest is triggered upon a missed payment. The ~~[policies and proce-~~
55 ~~dures]~~ uniform policy shall not include a requirement of a deposit prior
56 to medically-necessary care. The hospital shall refund any payments made

1 by the patient before the determination of eligibility for financial
2 assistance that exceeds the patient's liability after discounts are
3 applied. Such policies and procedures shall be applied consistently to
4 all eligible patients.

5 (f) In any legal action by or on behalf of a hospital to collect a
6 medical debt, the complaint shall be accompanied by an affidavit by the
7 hospital's chief financial officer stating that on information and
8 belief the patient does not meet the income or residency criteria for
9 financial assistance. Patients may apply for financial assistance at any
10 time during the collection process, including after the commencement of
11 a medical debt court action or upon the plaintiff obtaining a default
12 judgment. A hospital may use credit scoring software for the purposes of
13 establishing income eligibility and approving financial assistance, but
14 only if the hospital makes clear to the patient that providing a social
15 security number is not mandatory and the scoring does not negatively
16 impact the patient's credit score. However, credit scoring software
17 shall not be solely relied upon by the hospital in denying a patient's
18 application for financial assistance. The [~~policies and procedures~~]
19 uniform policy and form shall allow patients seeking financial assist-
20 ance to provide the following financial information and documentation in
21 support of their application: pay checks or pay stubs; unemployment
22 documentation; social security income; rent receipts; a letter from the
23 patient's employer attesting to the patient's gross income; or, if none
24 of the aforementioned information and documentation are available, a
25 written self-attestation of the patient's income may be used. General
26 hospitals shall, upon request, assist patients in understanding the
27 [~~hospital's application and form, policies and procedures~~] uniform
28 financial assistance application form and policy and in applying for
29 payment adjustments. [~~Application forms shall be printed and posted~~] The
30 commissioner shall translate the uniform financial assistance applica-
31 tion form and policy into the "primary languages" of each general hospi-
32 tal. Each general hospital shall print and post these materials to its
33 website in the "primary languages" of patients served by the general
34 hospital. For the purposes of this paragraph, "primary languages" shall
35 include any language that is either (i) used to communicate, during at
36 least five percent of patient visits in a year, by patients who cannot
37 speak, read, write or understand the English language at the level of
38 proficiency necessary for effective communication with health care
39 providers, or (ii) spoken by non-English speaking individuals comprising
40 more than one percent of the primary hospital service area population,
41 as calculated using demographic information available from the United
42 States Bureau of the Census, supplemented by data from school systems.
43 Decisions regarding such applications shall be made within thirty days
44 of receipt of a completed application. The [~~policies and procedures~~]
45 uniform financial assistance policy shall require that the hospital
46 issue any denial or approval of the application in writing with informa-
47 tion on how to appeal the denial and shall require the hospital to
48 establish an appeals process under which it will evaluate the denial of
49 an application. The hospital shall inform patients on how to file a
50 complaint against the hospital or a debt collector that is contracted on
51 behalf of the hospital regarding the patient's bill.

52 (g) The [~~policies and procedures~~] uniform financial assistance policy
53 shall provide that patients with incomes below six hundred percent of
54 the federal poverty level are deemed eligible for payment adjustments
55 and shall conform to the requirements set forth in paragraph (b) of this
56 subdivision, provided, however, that nothing in this subdivision shall

1 be interpreted as precluding hospitals from extending such payment
2 adjustments to other patients, either generally or on a case-by-case
3 basis. The [~~policies and procedures~~] uniform policy shall provide finan-
4 cial assistance for emergency hospital services, including emergency
5 transfers pursuant to the federal emergency medical treatment and active
6 labor act (42 USC 1395dd), to patients who reside in New York state and
7 for medically necessary hospital services for patients who reside in the
8 hospital's primary service area as determined according to criteria
9 established by the commissioner. In developing the criteria, the commis-
10 sioner shall consult with representatives of the hospital industry,
11 health care consumer advocates and local public health officials. The
12 criteria shall be made available to the public no less than thirty days
13 prior to the date of implementation and shall, at a minimum:

14 (i) prohibit a hospital from developing or altering its primary
15 service area in a manner designed to avoid medically underserved commu-
16 nities or communities with high percentages of uninsured residents;

17 (ii) ensure that every geographic area of the state is included in at
18 least one general hospital's primary service area so that eligible
19 patients may access care and financial assistance; and

20 (iii) require the hospital to notify the commissioner upon making any
21 change to its primary service area, and to include a description of its
22 primary service area in the hospital's annual implementation report
23 filed pursuant to subdivision three of section twenty-eight hundred
24 three-1 of this article.

25 (h) Nothing in this subdivision shall be interpreted as precluding
26 hospitals from extending payment adjustments for medically necessary
27 non-emergency hospital services to patients outside of the hospital's
28 primary service area. For patients determined to be eligible for finan-
29 cial assistance under the terms of [~~a hospital's~~] the uniform financial
30 assistance policy, the [~~policies and procedures~~] financial assistance
31 policy shall prohibit any limitations on financial assistance for
32 services based on the medical condition of the applicant, other than
33 typical limitations or exclusions based on medical necessity or the
34 clinical or therapeutic benefit of a procedure or treatment.

35 (i) A hospital or its agent shall not issue, authorize or permit an
36 income execution of a patient's wages, secure a lien or force a sale or
37 foreclosure of a patient's primary residence in order to collect an
38 outstanding medical bill and shall not send an account to collection if
39 the patient has submitted a completed application for financial assist-
40 ance, while the hospital determines the patient's eligibility for finan-
41 cial assistance. The [~~policies and procedures~~] uniform policy shall
42 provide for written notification, which shall include notification on a
43 patient bill, to a patient not less than thirty days prior to the refer-
44 ral of debts for collection and shall require that the collection agency
45 obtain the hospital's written consent prior to commencing a legal
46 action. The [~~policies and procedures~~] uniform policy shall require all
47 general hospital staff who interact with patients or have responsibility
48 for billing and collections to be trained in the [~~policies and proce-~~
49 ~~dures~~] policy, and require the implementation of a mechanism for the
50 general hospital to measure its compliance with the [~~policies and proce-~~
51 ~~dures~~] policy. The [~~policies and procedures~~] uniform policy shall
52 require that any collection agency, lawyer or firm under contract with a
53 general hospital for the collection of debts follow the [~~hospital's~~]
54 uniform financial assistance policy, including providing information to
55 patients on how to apply for financial assistance where appropriate.
56 The [~~policies and procedures~~] uniform policy shall prohibit collections

1 from a patient who is determined to be eligible for medical assistance
2 under title eleven of article five of the social services law at the
3 time services were rendered and for which services medicaid payment is
4 available.

5 (j) Reports required to be submitted to the department by each general
6 hospital as a condition for participation in the pools shall contain:

7 (i) a certification from an independent certified public accountant or
8 independent licensed public accountant or an attestation from a senior
9 official of the hospital that the hospital is in compliance with condi-
10 tions of participation in the pools;

11 (ii) a report on hospital costs incurred and uncollected amounts in
12 providing services to patients found eligible for financial assistance,
13 including the amount of care provided for a nominal payment amount,
14 during the period covered by the report;

15 (iii) hospital costs incurred and uncollected amounts for deductibles
16 and coinsurance for eligible patients with insurance or other third-par-
17 ty payor coverage;

18 (iv) the number of patients, organized according to United States
19 postal service zip code, race, ethnicity and gender, who applied for
20 financial assistance under the [hospital's] uniform financial assistance
21 policy, and the number, organized according to United States postal
22 service zip code, race, ethnicity and gender, whose applications were
23 approved and whose applications were denied;

24 (v) the reimbursement received for indigent care from the pool estab-
25 lished under this section;

26 (vi) the amount of funds that have been expended on financial assist-
27 ance from charitable bequests made or trusts established for the purpose
28 of providing financial assistance to patients who are eligible in
29 accordance with the terms of the bequests or trusts;

30 (vii) for hospitals located in social services districts in which the
31 district allows hospitals to assist patients with such applications, the
32 number of applications for eligibility for medicaid under title eleven
33 of article five of the social services law that the hospital assisted
34 patients in completing and the number denied and approved;

35 (viii) the hospital's financial losses resulting from services
36 provided under medicaid; and

37 (ix) the number of referrals to collection agents or contracted
38 external collection vendors, court cases and liens placed on any resi-
39 dences of patients through the collection process used by a hospital.

40 ~~(k) [Within ninety days of the effective date of the chapter of the~~
41 ~~laws of two thousand twenty three which amended this subdivision each~~
42 ~~hospital shall submit to the commissioner a written report on its poli-~~
43 ~~cies and procedures for financial assistance to patients which are used~~
44 ~~by the hospital as of such effective date. Such report shall include~~
45 ~~copies of its policies and procedures, including material which is~~
46 ~~distributed to patients, and a description of the hospital's financial~~
47 ~~aid policies and procedures. Such description shall include the income~~
48 ~~levels of patients on which eligibility is based, the financial aid~~
49 ~~eligible patients receive and the means of calculating such aid, and the~~
50 ~~service area, if any, used by the hospital to determine eligibility.~~

51 ~~(l)]~~ The commissioner shall include the data collected under paragraph
52 (j) of this subdivision in regular audits of the annual general hospital
53 institutional cost report.

54 ~~(m)]~~ (l) In the event the state is unable to secure all necessary
55 federal approvals to include, as part of the state's approved state plan
56 under title nineteen of the federal social security act, a requirement

1 that compliance with this subdivision is a condition of participation in
2 pool distributions authorized pursuant to this section and section twen-
3 ty-eight hundred seven-w of this article, then such condition of partic-
4 ipation shall be deemed null and void. Notwithstanding section twelve of
5 this chapter, failure to comply with this subdivision by a general
6 hospital shall make the hospital liable for a civil penalty not to
7 exceed ten thousand dollars for each violation. The imposition of the
8 civil penalties shall be subject to section twelve-a of this chapter.

9 [~~(n)~~] (m) A hospital or its collection agents shall not report adverse
10 information about a patient to a consumer or financial reporting entity,
11 or commence civil action against a patient or delegate a collection
12 activity to a debt collector for nonpayment for one hundred eighty days
13 after the first post-service bill is issued; and a hospital shall not
14 report adverse information to a consumer reporting agency, or commence a
15 civil action against a patient or delegate a collection activity to a
16 debt collector, if: the hospital was notified that an appeal or a review
17 of a health insurance decision is pending within the immediately preced-
18 ing sixty days; or the patient has a pending application for or quali-
19 fied for financial assistance. A hospital shall report the fulfillment
20 of a patient's payment obligation within thirty days after the obli-
21 gation is fulfilled to a consumer or financial reporting entity to which
22 the hospital had reported adverse information about the patient.

23 § 4. Subdivision 14 of section 2807-k of the public health law is
24 REPEALED and subdivisions 15, 16 and 17 are renumbered subdivisions 14,
25 15 and 16.

26 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately; provided that (a)
27 section two of this act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth
28 day after it shall have become a law; and (b) sections one and three of
29 this act shall take effect October 1, 2024 and apply to funding distrib-
30 utions made on or after January 1, 2025. Effective immediately, the
31 commissioner of health may make regulations and take other actions
32 reasonably necessary to implement sections one, two and three of this
33 act on their respective effective dates.