

ONE HUNDRED FOURTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 554

Introduced by Kolterman, 24.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to review and examine information regarding air ambulance costs and the information available to consumers about such costs. Air ambulances most commonly transport patients with life-threatening conditions or in emergency situations. The Association of Air Medical Services estimates that more than 550,000 patients in the United States use air ambulances each year. However, using air ambulances is expensive and might not be covered by the patient's health insurance policy.

Air ambulances are generally utilized in situations in which patients have no control over how they are transported for treatment. Time is often a critical factor in deciding transportation for care. Patients are usually not able to negotiate prices or refuse transport when requiring urgent medical care. Refusing service is not an easy choice when trained medical staff have determined an air ambulance is a necessity. Ill patients often cannot make a free choice whether to use an air ambulance, nor is there information available as to the cost of the transportation and whether it is covered by insurance.

According to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the average air ambulance trip is 52 miles and costs between \$12,000 to \$25,000 per flight. Many air and ground ambulance services refuse a preferred provider contract with payers, forcing patients to pay high, uncontrolled billed charges. There are reports of large balance bills to air ambulance patients that were unexpected and often uncovered by insurance. Air ambulance bills appear to be a nationwide issue.

The study shall include an examination of the following:

(1) The cost of air ambulance services for patients in Nebraska for both in-network and out-of-network air ambulance services;

(2) When and how consumers are notified of air ambulance costs and balance billing and what recourse is available for lack of coverage;

(3) What effect federal law has on rates for air transport in medical trauma or emergency situations; and

(4) How other states are addressing the need for transparency in air ambulance charges and what coverage is available for air transportation in medical emergencies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.