

New Law Aims to Help Smokers Quit

Governor Quinn signed Senate Bill 673, sponsored in the House by State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz(D-Chicago).

Senate Bill 673 requires group health insurance plans to offer coverage for the cost of smoking cessation products and services for up to \$500 annually. Smoking cessation program must follow evidence-based education or medical treatment, including tobacco use counseling and over the counter and prescription medication.

"Many people need some assistance to quit smoking; any smoker or former smoker can tell you it's not an easy addiction to overcome," Feigenholtz said. "Smoking cessation programs can be very expensive. This bill breaks down the financial barrier that prevents a lot of people from kicking the habit for good and living healthier lives."

Tobacco use is cited as the number one preventable cause of death and disease in Illinois. Direct health care costs alone total \$4.1 billion annually in addition to \$4.35 in indirect costs related to loss of productivity.

"Tobacco use is not only a serious health problem, it's also an expensive one," said Feigenholtz. "Insurance companies did not oppose this bill because they recognize that making these small investments to reduce tobacco use now will yield much more beneficial long-term results."
