

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Exempt Health Care Sharing Ministries from Insurance Requirements

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 24-A MRSA §704, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 2001, c. 79, §1, is amended to read:

1. Health insurance. For purposes of this Title, except as provided in subsection 2 and subsection 3, "health insurance" means insurance of human beings against bodily injury, disablement or death by accident or accidental means, or the expense thereof, or against disablement or expense resulting from sickness, and every insurance appertaining thereto, including provision for the mental and emotional welfare of human beings by defraying the costs of legal services only to the extent provided for in chapter 38.

Sec. 2. 24-A MRSA §704, sub-§3 is enacted to read:

3. Health care sharing ministry. As used in this Title and Title 24, the use of "health insurance" and related terms such as "accident and health insurance," "accident and sickness insurance," "carrier," "health," "health benefit plan," "health care," "health insurer" or "insurer" does not include, unless specifically provided otherwise in the law, a health care sharing ministry, and a health care sharing ministry may not be considered to be engaged in the business of insurance for the purposes of this Title. For the purposes of this section, "health care sharing ministry" means a faith-based, nonprofit organization that is exempt from taxation under the federal Internal Revenue Code and that:

- A. Limits participation in the health care sharing ministry to individuals who have a particular religious affiliation;
- B. Acts as a facilitator among participants who have financial and medical needs and matches those participants with other participants with the present ability to assist those with financial and medical needs in accordance with criteria established by the health care sharing ministry;
- C. Provides for the financial and medical needs of a participant through monetary contributions from one participant to another;
- D. Provides amounts that participants may contribute without any assumption of risk or promise to pay among the participants and requires no assumption of risk or promise to pay by the health care sharing ministry to the participants;
- E. Provides a written monthly statement to all participants that lists the total dollar amount of qualified needs submitted to the health care sharing ministry, as well as the amount actually published or assigned to participants for their contribution; and

F. Provides a written disclaimer on or accompanying all applications and guideline materials distributed by or on behalf of the organization that reads in substance: "Notice: The organization facilitating the sharing of medical expenses is not an insurance company and neither its guidelines nor plan of operation is an insurance policy. Whether anyone chooses to assist you with your medical bills will be totally voluntary because no other participant will be compelled by law to contribute toward your medical bills. Participation in the organization or a subscription to any of its documents should never be considered to be insurance. Regardless of whether you receive payment for medical expenses or whether this organization continues to operate, you are always personally responsible for the payment of your own medical bills."

SUMMARY

This bill exempts a health care sharing ministry from the definition of "health insurance" under the Maine Insurance Code.