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Diabetes Legislation on Its Way to Governor

Dec. 15, 2000 – Legislation sponsored by state Senator John J.H. Schwarz, M.D.. R-Battle Creek, has passed both Houses of the Legislature and is on its way to the governor's desk nearly two years after its introduction. Known as the Diabetes Cost Reduction Act, this legislation will ensure that Michigan's diabetic citizens, who now have health insurance, will have their coverage expanded to include the vital supplies, medications, and education prescribed by a physician to manage their diabetes appropriately.

"More than a half-million people in Michigan now suffer from diabetes," Schwarz said. "Through proper training and treatment, these people can lead relatively healthy and productive lives. Without the necessary medications and education, they needlessly face the risk of blindness, loss of limbs, kidney and heart disease, and even death.

"This legislation will not only help save people's lives, in the long run, it will help everyone save money. The devastating complications of diabetes are very costly."

Senate Bill 260 requires Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan to cover the cost of insulin and other medications used to treat diabetes, and physician prescribed supplies and educational

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training. This coverage applies to those with gestational diabetes, insulin dependent diabetes, and non-insulin-dependent diabetes. The companion bill, Senate Bill 261, sponsored by Senator Dianne Byrum, would extend this coverage to those insured by private health insurers or by health maintenance organizations.

More than 30 other states have already enacted similar laws to help reduce the high costs associated with diabetes and its complications.

"Unlike other diseases, we know how to prevent the complications that out-of-control diabetes can cause," Schwarz said. "Failure to enact these laws would prove both wrong and costly."

Both bills now await approval by the governor.

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