

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
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SENATE DRS35183-MG-66A (02/24)

Short Title: Designate Primary Stroke Centers. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Pate, Bingham, and Wade (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO
3 DESIGNATE QUALIFIED HOSPITALS AS PRIMARY STROKE CENTERS, AS
4 RECOMMENDED BY THE JUSTUS-WARREN HEART DISEASE AND STROKE
5 PREVENTION TASK FORCE.

6 Whereas, stroke is the fourth leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability
7 among North Carolinians; and

8 Whereas, North Carolina is part of the "stroke belt," an eight to 12 state region that
9 historically has had substantially higher stroke death rates compared to the rest of the nation;
10 and

11 Whereas, the rapid identification, diagnosis, and treatment of stroke can save the
12 lives of stroke patients and in some cases reverse neurological damage such as paralysis and
13 speech and language impairments, leaving stroke patients with few or minimal neurological
14 deficits; and

15 Whereas, the designation of acute care hospitals as primary stroke centers is
16 designed to improve the efficiency of care for stroke patients and increase the use of acute
17 stroke therapies such as thrombolytic therapies in order to reduce stroke-related complications,
18 reduce morbidity and mortality, improve long-term outcomes, and increase patient satisfaction;
19 and

20 Whereas, 30 acute care hospitals in North Carolina have received Joint Commission
21 certification as primary stroke centers; and

22 Whereas, all North Carolinians should be able to access the high quality stroke care
23 offered by primary stroke centers and should, therefore, know which acute care hospitals in this
24 State have been certified as primary stroke centers by the Joint Commission or achieved
25 equivalent accreditation by a nationally recognized accrediting body; Now, therefore,
26 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

27 **SECTION 1.** Article 5 of Chapter 131E of the General Statutes is amended by
28 adding a new section to read:

29 "**§ 131E-78.5. Designation as primary stroke center.**

30 (a) A hospital licensed under this Article shall not advertise or hold itself out to the
31 public as a primary stroke center unless the Department has designated the hospital as a
32 primary stroke center pursuant to this section. A hospital may apply to the Department for
33 designation as a primary stroke center on forms and according to procedures established by the
34 Department.

35 (b) The Department shall designate as a primary stroke center any hospital whose
36 application demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Department that it is certified as a primary



1 stroke center by the Joint Commission or some other nationally recognized accrediting body
2 that requires conformance to best practices for stroke care in order to be identified as a primary
3 stroke center.

4 (c) Each hospital designated as a primary stroke center pursuant to this section shall
5 make efforts to coordinate the provision of appropriate acute stroke care with other hospitals
6 licensed in this State through a formal written agreement. The agreement shall, at a minimum,
7 address (i) transportation of acute stroke patients to hospitals designated as primary stroke
8 centers and (ii) acceptance by hospitals designated as primary stroke centers of acute stroke
9 patients initially treated at hospitals that are not capable of providing appropriate stroke care.

10 (d) The Department shall maintain within the Division of Health Service Regulation,
11 Office of Emergency Services, a list of the hospitals designated as primary stroke centers in
12 accordance with this section and post the list on the Department's Internet Web site. Annually
13 on June 1, the Department shall transmit this list to the medical director of each licensed
14 emergency medical services provider in this State.

15 (e) The Department may suspend or revoke a hospital's designation as a primary stroke
16 center if the Department determines the hospital is not in compliance with any of the
17 requirements specified in this section.

18 (f) A hospital may contest any adverse action taken by the Department on its
19 designation as a primary stroke center in accordance with Chapter 150B of the General
20 Statutes.

21 (g) Nothing in this section shall be construed to do any of the following:

22 (1) Establish a standard of medical practice for stroke patients.

23 (2) Restrict in any way the authority of any hospital to provide services
24 authorized under its hospital license.

25 (h) The Department may adopt regulations to implement the provisions of this section.

26 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2013.