

SB97 INTRODUCED



1 SB97
2 QN8MU54-1
3 By Senator Allen
4 RFD: Healthcare
5 First Read: 13-Jan-26



SYNOPSIS:

This bill would establish the Alabama Health Command as an independent agency tasked with designating a virtual AI-assisted health platform that may be used in conjunction with rural hospitals, clinics, and health care clinicians that allows consumers in rural areas of the state to connect with a rural health care provider and receive other health-related services, such as wellness education and follow-up assistance, in a virtual encounter.

This bill would require the Alabama Health Command to establish standards to ensure patient privacy and ensure the platform does not provide any practice that constitutes the practice of a health care profession.

This bill would also exempt rural hospitals and other rural health care providers and state health institutions that contract to use the virtual AI-assisted health platform from competitive bid laws.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT



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Relating to rural health care; to establish the Alabama Health Command to designate an entity to develop a virtual AI-assisted health platform to provide certain health care services to consumers in rural areas of the state; to require the Alabama Health Command to establish certain standards; and to exempt rural health care providers that contract to use the virtual AI-assisted health platform from competitive bid laws.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) The state is facing a number of challenges in its ability to deliver quality health care in rural communities across the state.

(2) AI-based technologies hold promising potential in providing basic health and wellness information and educational material to rural patients, connecting patients with rural health care providers, and answering general questions that can be handled outside the clinical setting.

(3) A system of providing for virtual encounters with patients using an avatar-based technology would facilitate meaningful communication with a patient and provide ease of access for the patient to connect with an appropriate rural health care provider.

(4) To the extent federal funds are made available to rural health care providers earmarked for rural health care initiatives, whether through the Rural Health Transformation Program or from other grants from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Health Resources Services Administration,



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or Department of Health and Human Services, having a uniform, interoperable avatar-based virtual encounter system available to all rural health care providers will position the state as a leader in transforming the delivery of rural health care services.

(5) Sustainable delivery of rural health care services increasingly depends on the ability of health systems to leverage modern digital platforms that support education, navigation, and health-related partnerships aligned with patient needs.

Section 2. (a) As used in this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) AVATAR-BASED VIRTUAL ENCOUNTER SYSTEM. A digital, interactive platform that enables a consumer to participate in a virtual health-related encounter through one or more computer-generated avatars representing an automated interface, a participating health care provider, a user, or a partner institution tethered together within a single, unified visual environment. The system presents the consumer interaction together with identifying information of participating rural or remote health care providers, accreditation indicators, or other authorized entities, and may link or tether avatar interactions to health-related data for the purposes of health management services, navigation, education, referral, and the contextual presentation of health-related information, resources, or promotions relevant to the consumer's needs. The term does not include the diagnosis, treatment, or prescription of medical conditions



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85 and does not, without connection to a licensed clinician,
86 constitute the practice of a health care profession.

87 (2) DEVELOPER. The business entity that develops the
88 virtual AI-assisted health platform that is designated by the
89 Alabama Health Command pursuant to subsection (c).

90 (3) HEALTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES. Includes services
91 relating to health research; wellness and prevention
92 education; record management; scheduling of appointments;
93 connecting or navigating a consumer to a rural health care
94 provider; providing consumers access to escalation options,
95 including connecting access for telehealth interactions with
96 rural health care providers; recommending that a consumer seek
97 emergency care; and routine follow-up assistance. The term
98 does not include treating or diagnosing illnesses or medical
99 conditions.

100 (4) RURAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDER. A rural hospital, rural
101 health clinic, other licensed rural health care facility, or
102 any licensed clinician practicing in a rural area of the
103 state.

104 (b) (1) The Alabama Health Command is created for the
105 purpose of designating an entity to develop, along with
106 providing standards and qualifications for the utilization of,
107 a virtual AI-assisted health platform to be instituted in
108 rural communities throughout the state.

109 (2) The Alabama Health Command shall be an agency that
110 acts independently under the direction and authority of a
111 director who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure
112 of the Governor. The director must have a knowledge of



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AI-based technology platforms and shall be responsible for administering and implementing this section. The director may employ or contract with individuals as needed to carry out these responsibilities.

(c) The Alabama Health Command shall designate a business entity that is headquartered in the state to develop a uniform, interoperable, virtual AI-assisted health platform that may be used throughout the state to provide consumer-initiated, health management services in rural communities. The platform must have the capability of using a patented avatar-based virtual encounter system.

(d) The Alabama Health Command shall establish standards that:

(1) Ensure that the developer of the platform holds the necessary patent or legal or licensing rights to the platform and related technologies;

(2) Provide for the sharing and transfer of health data while protecting patient privacy, including certification of electronic health records, interoperability, algorithm transparency, and other information sharing;

(3) Incorporate guardrails to prevent consumers from receiving misinformation and to prevent the platform from offering or providing any service that would be considered the practice of health care by a professional licensed under Title 34, Code of Alabama 1975; and

(4) Any other standards the director determines are necessary to protect consumers while optimizing and leveraging available technologies to promote efficient delivery of health



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141 management services.

142 (e) Any rural health care provider or state health
143 institution that contracts to use the virtual AI-assisted
144 health platform developed pursuant to subsection (c) is exempt
145 from Article 5 of Chapter 4 of Title 41 and Chapter 16 of
146 Title 41, Code of Alabama 1975.

147 Section 3. This act shall become effective on October
148 1, 2026.