

Article 51.

Nature of Policies.

§ 58-51-1. Form, classification and rates to be approved by Commissioner.

No policy of insurance against loss or damage from the sickness or the bodily injury or death of the insured by accident shall be issued or delivered to any person in this State until a copy of the form thereof and of the classification of risks and the premium rates pertaining thereto have been filed with, and the forms approved by, the Commissioner. If the Commissioner shall notify, in writing, the company or other insurer which has filed such form that it does not comply with the requirements of law, specifying the reasons for his opinion, it shall be unlawful thereafter for any such insurer to issue any policy in such form. The action of the Commissioner in this regard shall be subject to review by any court of competent jurisdiction; but nothing in this Article shall be construed to give jurisdiction to any court not already having jurisdiction. (1911, c. 209, s. 1; 1913, c. 91, s. 1; C.S., s. 6477; 1945, c. 385; 1991, c. 720, s. 4.)

§ 58-51-5. Form of policy.

(a) No policy of accident and health insurance shall be delivered or issued for delivery to any person in this State unless:

- (1) The entire money and other considerations therefor are expressed therein; and
- (2) The time at which the insurance takes effect and terminates is expressed therein; and
- (3) It purports to insure only one person, except that a policy may insure, originally or by subsequent amendment, upon the application of an adult member of a family who shall be deemed the policyholder, any two or more eligible members of that family, including husband, wife, dependent children or any children under a specified age which shall not exceed 19 years and any other persons dependent upon the policyholder; and
- (4) The style, arrangement, and overall appearance of the policy, any endorsements, or attached papers give no undue prominence to any portion of the text. For the purpose of this subdivision, "text" includes all printed matter except the name and address of the insurer, the name or title of the policy, and captions and subcaptions.
- (5) The exceptions and reductions of indemnity are set forth in the policy and, except those which are set forth in G.S. 58-51-15, are printed, at the insurer's option, either included with the benefit provision to which they apply, or under an appropriate caption such as "EXCEPTIONS," or "EXCEPTIONS AND REDUCTIONS," provided that if an exception or reduction specifically applies only to a particular benefit of the policy, a statement of such exception or reduction shall be included with the benefit provision to which it applies; and
- (6) Each such form, including riders and endorsements, shall be identified by a form number in the lower left-hand corner of the first page thereof; and
- (7) It contains no provision purporting to make any portion of the charter, rules, constitution, or bylaws of the insurer a part of the policy unless such portion is set forth in full in the policy, except in the case of the incorporation of, or reference to, a statement of rates or classification of risks, or short-rate table filed with the Commissioner.

- (8) It contains no provision excluding from coverage claims that are subject to the Workers' Compensation Act, Article 1 of Chapter 97 of the General Statutes, unless the exclusion extends to only specific medical charges for which the employee, employer, or carrier is liable or responsible according to a final adjudication of the claim under that Article or an order of the North Carolina Industrial Commission approving a settlement agreement entered into under that Article.

(b) If any policy is issued by an insurer domiciled in this State for delivery to a person residing in another state, and if the official having responsibility for the administration of the insurance laws of such other state shall have advised the Commissioner that any such policy is not subject to approval or disapproval by such official, the Commissioner may by ruling require that such policy meet the standards set forth in subsection (a) of this section and in G.S. 58-51-15. (1913, c. 91, s. 2; C.S., s. 6478; 1945, c. 385; 1953, c. 1095, s. 1; 1979, c. 755, s. 8; 2001-216, s. 4; 2001-487, s. 102(b).)

§ 58-51-10. Right to return policy and have premium refunded.

Every individual or family hospitalization policy, certificate, contract or plan issued for delivery in the State of North Carolina on and after July 1, 1961, must have printed thereon or attached thereto a notice stating substantially: "YOUR POLICY MAY NOT BE IN FORCE WHEN YOU HAVE A CLAIM! PLEASE READ! Your policy was issued based on the information entered in your application, a copy of which is attached to the policy. If, to the best of your knowledge and belief, there is any misstatement in your application or if any information concerning the medical history of any insured person has been omitted, you should advise the Company immediately regarding the incorrect or omitted information; otherwise, your policy may not be a valid contract. RIGHT TO RETURN POLICY WITHIN 10 DAYS. If for any reason you are not satisfied with your policy, you may return it to the Company within 10 days of the date you received it and the premium you paid will be promptly refunded." If a policyholder or certificate holder or purchaser of a contract or plan returns same pursuant to such notice, coverage under such policy, certificate, contract or plan shall become void immediately upon the mailing or delivery of the contract, certificate, policy or plan to the insurance company at its home or branch office or to the agent through whom it was purchased. Coverage shall exist under such policy, certificate, contract or plan within said 10-day period until said mailing or delivery of the contract. (1955, c. 850, s. 10; 1961, c. 962.)

§ 58-51-15. Accident and health policy provisions.

(a) Required Provisions. – Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section each such policy delivered or issued for delivery to any person in this State shall contain the provisions specified in this subsection in the substance of the words that appear in this section. Such provisions shall be preceded individually by the caption appearing in this subsection or, at the option of the insurer, by such appropriate individual or group captions or subcaptions as the Commissioner may approve.

- (1) A provision in the substance of the following language:

ENTIRE CONTRACT; CHANGES: This policy, including the endorsements and the attached papers, if any, constitutes the entire contract of insurance. No change in this policy shall be valid until approved by an executive officer of the insurer and unless such approval be endorsed hereon or

attached hereto. No agent has authority to change this policy or waive any of its provisions.

(2) A provision in the substance of the following language:

TIME LIMIT ON CERTAIN DEFENSES:

a. After two years from the date of issue or reinstatement of this policy no misstatements except fraudulent misstatements made by the applicant in the application for such policy shall be used to void the policy or deny a claim for loss incurred or disability (as defined in the policy) commencing after the expiration of such two-year period.

The foregoing policy provision may be used in its entirety only in major or catastrophe hospitalization policies and major medical policies each affording benefits of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) or more for any one sickness or injury; disability income policies affording benefits of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or more per month for not less than 12 months; and franchise policies. Other policies to which this section applies must delete the words "except fraudulent misstatements."

(The foregoing policy provision shall not be so construed as to affect any legal requirement for avoidance of a policy or denial of a claim during such initial two-year period, nor to limit the application of G.S. 58-51-15(b), (1), (2), (3), (4) and (5) in the event of misstatement with respect to age or occupation or other insurance.)

(A policy which the insured has the right to continue in force subject to its terms by the timely payment of premium:

1. Until at least age 50 or,
2. In the case of a policy issued after age 44, for at least five years from its date of issue, may contain in lieu of the foregoing the following provisions (from which the clause in parentheses may be omitted at the insurer's option) under the caption "INCONTESTABLE."

After this policy has been in force for a period of two years during the lifetime of the insured (excluding any period during which the insured is disabled), it shall become incontestable as to the statements contained in the application.)

b. This policy contains a provision limiting coverage for preexisting conditions. Preexisting conditions are covered under this policy ____ (insert number of months or days, not to exceed one year) after the effective date of coverage. Preexisting conditions mean "those conditions for which medical advice, diagnosis, care, or treatment was received or recommended within the one-year period immediately preceding the effective date of the person's coverage." Credit for having satisfied some or all of the preexisting condition waiting periods under previous health benefits coverage shall be given in accordance with G.S. 58-51-17. The excepted benefits described in G.S. 58-68-25(b) are not subject to this requirement for giving credit.

(3) A provision in the substance of the following language:

GRACE PERIOD: A grace period of _____ (insert a number not less than "7" for weekly premium policies, "10" for monthly premium policies and "31" for all other policies) days will be granted for the payment of each premium falling due after the first premium, during which grace period the policy shall continue in force.

(A policy which contains a cancellation provision may add, at the end of the above provision, subject to the right of the insurer to cancel in accordance with the cancellation provision hereof.

A policy in which the insurer reserves the right to refuse any renewal shall have, at the beginning of the above provision,

Unless not less than five days prior to the premium due date the insurer has delivered to the insured or has mailed to his last address as shown by the record of the insurer written notice of its intention not to renew this policy beyond the period for which the premium has been accepted.)

- (4) A provision in the substance of the following language:

REINSTATEMENT: If any renewal premium be not paid within the time granted the insured for payment, a subsequent acceptance of premium by the insurer or by any agent duly authorized by the insurer to accept such premium, without requiring in connection therewith an application for reinstatement, shall reinstate the policy; provided, however, that if the insurer or such agent requires an application for reinstatement and issues a conditional receipt for the premium tendered, the policy will be reinstated upon approval of such application by the insurer, or, lacking such approval, upon the forty-fifth day following the date of such conditional receipt unless the insurer has previously notified the insured in writing of its disapproval of such application. The reinstated policy shall cover only loss resulting from such accidental injury as may be sustained after the date of reinstatement and loss due to such sickness as may begin more than 10 days after such date. In all other respects the insured and insurer shall have the same rights thereunder as they had under the policy immediately before the due date of the defaulted premium, subject to any provisions endorsed hereon or attached hereto in connection with the reinstatement. Any premium accepted in connection with a reinstatement shall be applied to a period for which premium has not been previously paid, but not to any period more than 60 days prior to the date of reinstatement.

(The last sentence of the above provision may be omitted from any policy which the insured has the right to continue in force subject to its terms by the timely payment of premiums:

- a. Until at least age 50 or,
- b. In the case of a policy issued after age 44, for at least five years from its date of issue.)

- (5) A provision in the substance of the following language:

NOTICE OF CLAIM: Written notice of claim must be given to the insurer within 20 days after the occurrence or commencement of any loss covered by the policy, or as soon thereafter as is reasonably possible. Notice given by or on behalf of the insured or the beneficiary to the insurer at _____ (insert the location of such office as the insurer may designate for the purpose), or to any

authorized agent of the insurer, with information sufficient to identify the insured, shall be deemed notice to the insurer.

(In a policy providing a loss-of-time benefit which may be payable for at least two years, an insurer may at its option insert the following between the first and second sentences of the above provision:

Subject to the qualifications set forth below, if the insured suffers loss of time on account of disability for which indemnity may be payable for at least two years, he shall, at least once in every six months after having given notice of claim, give to the insurer notice of continuance of said disability, except in the event of legal incapacity. The period of six months following any filing of proof by the insured or any payment by the insurer on account of such claim or any denial of liability in whole or in part by the insurer shall be excluded in applying this provision. Delay in the giving of such notice shall not impair the insured's right to any indemnity which would otherwise have accrued during the period of six months preceding the date on which such notice is actually given.)

- (6) A provision in the substance of the following language:

CLAIM FORMS: The insurer, upon receipt of a notice of claim, will furnish to the claimant such forms as are usually furnished by it for filing proofs of loss. If such forms are not furnished within 15 days after the giving of such notice the claimant shall be deemed to have complied with the requirements of this policy as to proof of loss upon submitting, within the time fixed in the policy for filing proofs of loss, written proof covering the occurrence, the character and the extent of the loss for which claim is made.

- (7) A provision in the substance of the following language:

PROOFS OF LOSS: Written proof of loss must be furnished to the insurer at its said office in the case of a claim for loss for which this policy provides any periodic payment contingent upon continuing loss within 180 days after the termination of the period for which the insurer is liable and in case of a claim for any other loss within 180 days after the date of such loss. Failure to furnish such proof within the time required shall not invalidate nor reduce any claim if it was not reasonably possible to give proof within such time, provided such proof is furnished as soon as reasonably possible and in no event, except in the absence of legal capacity of the insured, later than one year from the time proof is otherwise required.

- (8) A provision in the substance of the following language:

TIME OF PAYMENT OF CLAIMS: Indemnities payable under this policy for any loss other than loss for which this policy provides any period payment will be paid immediately upon receipt of due written proof of such loss. Subject to due written proof of loss, all accrued indemnities for loss for which this policy provides periodic payment will be paid _____ (insert period for payment which must not be less frequently than monthly) and any balance remaining unpaid upon the termination of liability will be paid immediately upon receipt of due written proof.

- (9) A provision in the substance of the following language:

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS: Indemnity for loss of life will be payable in accordance with the beneficiary designation and the provisions respecting such payment which may be prescribed herein and effective at the time of payment. If no such designation or provision is then effective, such indemnity shall be payable to the estate of the insured. Any other accrued indemnities unpaid at the insured's death may, at the option of the insurer, be paid either to such beneficiary or to such estate. All other indemnities will be payable to the insured.

(The following provisions, or either of them, may be included with the foregoing provision at the option of the insurer:

If any indemnity of this policy shall be payable to the estate of the insured, or to an insured or beneficiary who is a minor or otherwise not competent to give a valid release, the insurer may pay such indemnity, up to an amount not exceeding \$ _____ (insert an amount which shall not exceed three thousand dollars (\$3,000)), to any relative by blood or connection by marriage of the insured or beneficiary who is deemed by the insurer to be equitably entitled thereto. Any payment made by the insurer in good faith pursuant to this provision shall fully discharge the insurer to the extent of such payment.

Subject to any written direction of the insured in the application or otherwise all or a portion of any indemnities provided by this policy on account of hospital, nursing, medical, or surgical services, may at the insurer's option and unless the insured requests otherwise in writing not later than the time of filing proofs of such loss, be paid directly to the hospital or person rendering such services; but it is not required that the service be rendered by a particular hospital or person.)

- (10) A provision in the substance of the following language:

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS AND AUTOPSY: The insurer at its own expense shall have the right and opportunity to examine the person of the insured when and as often as it may reasonably require during the pendency of a claim hereunder and to make an autopsy in case of death where it is not forbidden by law.

- (11) A provision in the substance of the following language:

LEGAL ACTIONS: No action at law or in equity shall be brought to recover on this policy prior to the expiration of 60 days after written proof of loss has been furnished in accordance with the requirements of this policy. No such action shall be brought after the expiration of three years after the time written proof of loss is required to be furnished.

- (12) A provision in the substance of the following language:

CHANGE OF BENEFICIARY: Unless the insured makes an irrevocable designation of beneficiary, the right to change of beneficiary is reserved to the insured and the consent of the beneficiary or beneficiaries shall not be requisite to surrender or assignment of this policy or to any change of beneficiary or beneficiaries, or to any other changes in this policy.

(The first clause of this provision, relating to the irrevocable designation of beneficiary, may be omitted at the insurer's option.)

(b) Other Provisions. – Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, no such policy delivered or issued for delivery to any person in this State shall contain provisions respecting the matters set forth below unless such provisions are in the substance of the words that appear in this section. Any such provision contained in the policy shall be preceded individually by the appropriate caption appearing in this subsection or, at the option of the insurer, by such appropriate individual or group captions or subcaptions as the Commissioner may approve.

(1) A provision in the substance of the following language:

CHANGE OF OCCUPATION: If the insured be injured or contract sickness after having changed his occupation to one classified by the insurer as more hazardous than that stated in this policy or while doing for compensation anything pertaining to an occupation so classified, the insurer will pay only such portion of the indemnities provided in this policy as the premium paid would have purchased at the rates and within the limits fixed by the insurer for such more hazardous occupation. If the insured changes his occupation to one classified by the insurer as less hazardous than that stated in this policy, the insurer, upon receipt of proof of such change of occupation, will reduce the premium rate accordingly, and will return the excess pro rata unearned premium from the date of change of occupation or from the policy anniversary date immediately preceding receipt of such proof, whichever is the more recent. In applying this provision, the classification of occupational risk and the premium rates shall be such as have been last filed by the insurer prior to the occurrence of the loss for which the insurer is liable or prior to date of proof of change in occupation with the state official having supervision of insurance in the state where the insured resided at the time this policy was issued; but if such filing was not required, then the classification of occupational risk and the premium rates shall be those last made effective by the insurer in such state prior to the occurrence of the loss or prior to the date of proof of change in occupation.

(2) A provision in the substance of the following language:

MISSTATEMENT OF AGE: If the age of the insured has been misstated, all amounts payable under this policy shall be such as the premium paid would have purchased at the correct age.

(3) A provision in the substance of the following language:

OTHER INSURANCE IN THIS INSURER: If an accident or health or accident and health policy or policies previously issued by the insurer to the insured be in force concurrently herewith, making the aggregate indemnity for _____ (insert type of coverage or coverages) in excess of \$ _____ (insert maximum limit of indemnity or indemnities) the excess insurance shall be void and all premiums paid for such excess shall be returned to the insured or to his estate.

Or, in lieu thereof:

Insurance effective at any one time on the insured under a like policy or policies in this insurer is limited to the one such policy elected by the insured, his beneficiary or his estate, as the case may be, and the insurer will return all premiums paid for all other such policies.

(4) A provision in the substance of the following language:

INSURANCE WITH OTHER INSURERS: If there be other valid coverage, not with this insurer, providing benefits for the same loss on a provision of service basis or on an expense incurred basis and of which this insurer has not been given written notice prior to the occurrence or commencement of loss, the only liability under any expense incurred coverage of this policy shall be for such proportion of the loss as the amount which would otherwise have been payable hereunder plus the total of the like amounts under all such other valid coverages for the same loss of which this insurer had notice bears to the total like amounts under all valid coverages for such loss, and for the return of such portion of the premiums paid as shall exceed the pro rata portion for the amount so determined. For the purpose of applying this provision when other coverage is on a provision of service basis, the "like amount" of such other coverage shall be taken as the amount which the services rendered would have cost in the absence of such coverage.

(If the foregoing policy provision is included in a policy which also contains the next following policy provision there shall be added to the caption of the foregoing provision the phrase "____ EXPENSE INCURRED BENEFITS." The insurer may, at its option, include in this provision a definition of "other valid coverage," approved as to form by the Commissioner, which definition shall be limited in subject matter to coverage provided by organizations subject to regulation by insurance law or by insurance authorities of this or any other state of the United States or any province of Canada, and by hospital or medical service organizations, and to any other coverage the inclusion of which may be approved by the Commissioner. In the absence of such definition such term shall not include group insurance, automobile medical payments insurance, or coverage provided by hospital or medical service organizations or by union welfare plans or employer or employee benefit organizations. For the purpose of applying the foregoing policy provision with respect to any insured, any amount of benefit provided for such insured pursuant to any compulsory benefit statute (including any workers' compensation or employer's liability statute) whether provided by a governmental agency or otherwise shall in all cases be deemed to be "other valid coverage" of which the insurer has had notice. In applying the foregoing policy provisions no third-party liability coverage shall be included as "other valid coverage.")

- (5) A provision in the substance of the following language:

INSURANCE WITH OTHER INSURERS: If there be other valid coverage, not with this insurer, providing benefits for the same loss on other than an expense incurred basis and of which this insurer has not been given written notice prior to the occurrence or commencement of loss, the only liability for such benefits under this policy shall be for such proportion of the indemnities otherwise provided hereunder for such loss as the like indemnities of which the insurer had notice (including the indemnities under this policy) bear to the total amount of all like indemnities for such loss, and for the return of such portion of the premium paid as shall exceed the pro rata portion for the indemnities thus determined.

(If the foregoing policy provision is included in a policy which also contains the next preceding policy provision there shall be added to the caption of the foregoing provision the phrase "____ OTHER BENEFITS." The insurer may, at its option, include in this provision a definition of "other valid coverage," approved as to form by the Commissioner, which definition shall be limited in subject matter to coverage provided by organizations subject to regulation by insurance law or by insurance authorities of this or any other state of the United States or any province of Canada, and to any other coverage the inclusion of which may be approved by the Commissioner. In the absence of such definition such term shall not include group insurance, or benefits provided by union welfare plans or by employer or employee benefit organizations. For the purpose of applying the foregoing policy provision with respect to any insured, any amount of benefit provided for such insured pursuant to any compulsory benefit statute (including any workers' compensation or employer's liability statute) whether provided by a governmental agency or otherwise shall in all cases be deemed to be "other valid coverage" of which the insurer has had notice. In applying the foregoing policy provision no third-party liability coverage shall be included as "other valid coverage.")

(6) A provision in the substance of the following language:

RELATION OF EARNINGS TO INSURANCE: If the total monthly amount of loss of time benefits promised for the same loss under all valid loss of time coverage upon the insured, whether payable on a weekly or monthly basis, shall exceed the monthly earnings of the insured at the time disability commenced or his average monthly earnings for the period of two years immediately preceding a disability for which claim is made, whichever is the greater, the insurer will be liable only for such proportionate amount of such benefits under this policy as the amount of such monthly earnings or such average monthly earnings of the insured bears to the total amount of monthly benefits for the same loss under all such coverage upon the insured at the time such disability commences and for the return of such part of the premiums paid during such two years as shall exceed the pro rata amount of the premiums for the benefits actually paid hereunder; but this shall not operate to reduce the total monthly amount of benefits payable under all such coverage upon the insured below the sum of two hundred dollars (\$200.00) or the sum of the monthly benefits specified in such coverages, whichever is the lesser, nor shall it operate to reduce benefits other than those payable for loss of time.

(The foregoing policy provision may be inserted only in a policy which the insured has the right to continue in force subject to its terms by the timely payment of premiums:

- a. Until at least age 50 or,
- b. In the case of a policy issued after age 44, for at least five years from its date of issue.

The insurer may, at its option, include in this provision a definition of "valid loss of time coverage," approved as to form by the Commissioner, which definition shall be limited in subject matter to coverage provided by governmental agencies or by organizations subject to regulation by insurance

law or by insurance authorities of this or any other state of the United States or any province of Canada, or to any other coverage the inclusion of which may be approved by the Commissioner or any combination of such coverages. In the absence of such definition such term shall not include any coverage provided for such insured pursuant to any compulsory benefit statute (including any workers' compensation or employer's liability statute), or benefits provided by union welfare plans or by employer or employee benefit organizations.)

(7) A provision in the substance of the following language:

UNPAID PREMIUM: Upon the payment of a claim under this policy, any premium then due and unpaid or covered by any note or written order may be deducted therefrom.

(8) Repealed by Session Laws 1955, c. 886, s. 1.

(9) A provision in the substance of the following language:

CONFORMITY WITH STATE STATUTES: Any provision of this policy which, on its effective date, is in conflict with the statutes of the state in which the insured resides on such date is hereby amended to conform to the minimum requirements of such statutes.

(10) A provision in the substance of the following language:

ILLEGAL OCCUPATION: The insurer shall not be liable for any loss to which a contributing cause was the insured's commission of or attempt to commit a felony or to which a contributing cause was the insured's being engaged in an illegal occupation.

(11) Repealed by Session Laws 2001-334, s. 4.1, effective October 1, 2001.

(c) Inapplicable or Inconsistent Provisions. – If any provision of this section is in whole or in part inapplicable to or inconsistent with the coverage provided by a particular form of policy the insurer, with the approval of the Commissioner, shall omit from such policy any inapplicable provision or part of a provision, and shall modify any inconsistent provision or part of the provision in such manner as to make the provision as contained in the policy consistent with the coverage provided by the policy.

(d) Order of Certain Policy Provisions. – The provisions which are the subject of subsections (a) and (b) of this section, or any corresponding provisions which are used in lieu thereof in accordance with such subsections, shall be printed in the consecutive order of the provisions in such subsections or, at the option of the insurer, any such provision may appear as a unit in any part of the policy, with other provisions to which it may be logically related, provided the resulting policy shall not be in whole or in part unintelligible, uncertain, ambiguous, abstruse, or likely to mislead a person to whom the policy is offered, delivered or issued.

(e) Third-Party Ownership. – The word "insured," as used in Articles 50 through 55 of this Chapter shall not be construed as preventing a person other than the insured with a proper insurable interest from making application for and owning a policy covering the insured or from being entitled under such a policy to any indemnities, benefits and rights provided therein.

(f) Requirements of Other Jurisdictions.

(1) Any policy of a foreign or alien insurer, when delivered or issued for delivery to any person in this State, may contain any provision which is not less favorable to the insured or the beneficiary than the provisions of Articles 50 through 55 of this Chapter and which is prescribed or required by the law of the state under which the insurer is organized.

- (2) Any policy of a domestic insurer may, when issued for delivery in any other state or country, contain any provision permitted or required by the laws of such other state or country.

(g) Filing Procedure. – The Commissioner may make such reasonable rules and regulations concerning the procedure for the filing or submission of policies subject to Articles 50 through 55 of this Chapter as are necessary, proper or advisable to the administration of Articles 50 through 55 of this Chapter. This provision shall not abridge any other authority granted the Commissioner by law.

(h) Preexisting Condition Exclusion Clarification. – Sub-subdivision (a)(2)b. of this section does not apply to policies issued to eligible individuals under G.S. 58-68-60.

(i) Applicability. – This section applies to all accident and health insurance policies delivered or issued for delivery in this State, including certificates issued under group policies that are delivered or issued for delivery in this State. This section also applies to certificates issued under a policy issued and delivered to a trust or association outside this State and covering persons residing in this State. (1953, c. 1095, s. 2; 1955, c. 850, s. 8; c. 886, s. 1; 1961, c. 432; 1979, c. 755, ss. 9-12; 1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1110, s. 13; 1987, c. 864, s. 42; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 975, s. 2; 1991, c. 636, s. 3; c. 720, s. 35; 1993, c. 506, s. 4; c. 553, s. 17; 1995, c. 507, s. 23A.1(g); 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 742, s. 27; 1997-259, ss. 7, 7.1; 1999-351, s. 1; 2000-162, s. 4(d); 2001-334, s. 4.1; 2002-187, s. 5.2; 2005-223, ss. 4(a), 4(b); 2007-298, s. 2.1; 2009-382, s. 8.)

§ 58-51-16. Intoxicants and narcotics.

(a) Except for the payment of benefits for the necessary care and treatment of chemical dependency as provided by law, an accident and health insurer shall not be liable for any loss sustained or contracted in consequence of the insured's being intoxicated or under the influence of any narcotic unless administered on the advice of a physician.

(b) The provision in subsection (a) of this section may not be used with respect to a medical expense policy.

(c) For purposes of this section, "medical expense policy" means an accident and health insurance policy that provides hospital, medical, and surgical expense coverage. (2001-334, s. 4.2.)

§ 58-51-17. Portability for accident and health insurance.

(a) Rules Relating to Crediting Previous Coverage.

(1) Creditable coverage defined. – For the purposes of this section, "creditable coverage" means, with respect to an individual, coverage of the individual under any of the following:

- a. A group health plan as defined in G.S. 58-68-25(a)(4b).
- b. Health insurance coverage without regard to whether the coverage is offered in the group market, the individual market, or otherwise.
- c. Part A or part B of title XVIII of the Social Security Act.
- d. Title XIX of the Social Security Act, other than coverage consisting solely of benefits under section 1928.
- e. Chapter 55 of title 10, United States Code.
- f. A medical care program of the Indian Health Service or of a tribal organization.
- g. A State health benefits risk pool.
- h. A health plan offered under chapter 89 of title 5, United States Code.

- i. A public health plan (as defined in federal regulations).
- j. A health benefit plan under section 5(e) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. § 2504(e)).
- k. Title XXI of the Social Security Act (State Children's Health Insurance Program).

"Creditable coverage" does not include coverage consisting solely of coverage of excepted benefits as described in G.S. 58-68-25(b). However, short-term limited-duration health insurance coverage shall be considered creditable coverage for purposes of this section.

- (2) Not counting periods before significant breaks in coverage.
 - a. In general. – A period of creditable coverage shall not be counted, with respect to enrollment of an individual under an individual health insurance plan, if, after the period and before the enrollment date, there was a 63-day period during all of which the individual was not covered under any creditable coverage.
 - b. Waiting period not treated as a break in coverage. – For the purposes of sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision and subdivision (b)(3) of this section, any period that an individual is in a waiting period, as defined in G.S. 58-68-30(b)(4)c., for any coverage under an individual health insurance plan shall not be taken into account in determining the continuous period under sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision.
 - c. For an individual who elects COBRA continuation coverage during the second election period provided under the Trade Act of 2002, the days between the date the individual lost group health plan coverage and the first day of the second COBRA election period shall not be considered when determining whether a significant break in coverage has occurred.
- (3) Method of crediting coverage. – An individual health insurer shall count a period of creditable coverage without regard to the specific benefits covered during the period.
- (4) Establishment of period. – Periods of creditable coverage for an individual shall be established through presentation of certifications described in subsection (c) of this section or in another manner that is specified in regulations.
- (5) Determination of creditable coverage.
 - a. Determination within reasonable time. – If an individual health insurer receives creditable coverage information under subsection (c) of this section, the insurer shall, within a reasonable time following receipt of the information, make a determination regarding the amount of the individual's creditable coverage and the length of any exclusion that remains. Whether this determination is made within a reasonable time depends on the relevant facts and circumstances. Relevant facts and circumstances include whether a plan's application of a preexisting condition exclusion would prevent an individual from having access to urgent medical care.
 - b. No time limit on presenting evidence of creditable coverage. – An individual health insurer shall not impose any limit on the amount of

time that an individual has to present a certificate or other evidence of creditable coverage.

- (b) Exceptions.
 - (1) Exclusion not applicable to certain newborns. – Subject to subdivision (3) of this subsection, an individual health insurer shall not impose any preexisting condition exclusion in the case of an individual who, as of the last day of the 30-day period beginning with the individual's date of birth, is covered under creditable coverage.
 - (2) Exclusion not applicable to certain adopted children. – Subject to subdivision (3) of this subsection, an individual health insurer shall not impose any preexisting condition exclusion in the case of a child who is adopted or placed for adoption before attaining 18 years of age and who, as of the last day of the 30-day period beginning on the date of the adoption or placement for adoption, is covered under creditable coverage. The previous sentence does not apply to coverage before the date of the adoption or placement for adoption.
 - (3) Loss if break in coverage. – Subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection shall no longer apply to an individual after the end of the first 63-day period during all of which the individual was not covered under any creditable coverage.
- (c) Certifications and Disclosure of Coverage.
 - (1) In general. – An individual health insurer shall provide the certification described in this subdivision (i) at the time an individual ceases to be covered under the plan, and (ii) on the request on behalf of an individual made not later than 24 months after the date of cessation of the coverage described in clause (i) of this subdivision, whichever is later.
 - (2) Certification. – The certification described in this subdivision is a written certification of (i) the period of creditable coverage of the individual under the plan and (ii) any waiting period and affiliation period, if applicable, imposed with respect to the individual for any coverage under the plan.
- (d) Applicability. – This section applies to all health benefit plans of individual health insurance coverage delivered or issued for delivery in this State, including certificates issued under group policies that are delivered or issued for delivery in this State. This section also applies to certificates issued under a policy issued and delivered to a trust or association outside this State and covering persons residing in this State. (2007-298, s. 2.2; 2009-382, ss. 1, 9, 10.)

§ 58-51-20. Renewability of individual and blanket hospitalization and accident and health insurance policies.

(a) Every individual or blanket family hospitalization policy and accident and health policy, other than noncancelable or nonrenewable policies but including group, blanket and franchise policies, as defined in Articles 1 through 64 of this Chapter, covering less than 10 persons, issued in North Carolina after January 1, 1956, shall include in substance the following provision:

Renewability: This policy is renewable at the option of the policyholder unless sufficient notice of nonrenewal is given the policyholder in writing by the insurer.

Sufficient notice shall be, during the first year of any policy, or during the first year following any lapse and reinstatement, a period of 30 days before the premium due date. After one continuous year of coverage and acceptance of premium for any portion of the second or subsequent year

sufficient notice shall be a number of full months most nearly equivalent to one fourth the number of months of continuous coverage from the inception date of the policy, to the date of mailing of the notice: Provided no period of required notice shall exceed two years.

(b) No insurance company issuing individual or blanket family hospitalization or accident and health policies of insurance shall have the right to unilaterally restrict coverage, reduce benefits or increase rates upon any contract of hospitalization or accident and health insurance which is subject to the provisions of this section except as provided herein.

(c) Any hospitalization or accident and health policy reissued or renewed in the name of the insured during the grace period shall be construed to be a continuation of the policy first issued.

(d) The requirements of this section do not apply to a refusal or renewal because of a change of occupation of an insured to one classified by the insurer as uninsurable nor to an increase in rate due to a change of occupation of an insured to a more hazardous occupation. (1955, c. 886, s. 2; 1957, c. 1085, s. 2; 1979, c. 755, s. 13; 1985, c. 666, s. 71; 1989, c. 485, s. 55; 1991, c. 644, s. 27.)

§ 58-51-25. Policy coverage to continue as to children with an intellectual or physical disability; or dependent students on medically necessary leave of absence.

(a) An individual or group accident and health insurance policy, hospital service plan policy, or medical service plan policy that provides that coverage of a dependent child shall terminate upon attainment of the limiting age for dependent children specified in the policy or contract, shall also provide in substance that attainment of the limiting age shall not operate or terminate the coverage of the child while the child is and continues to be (i) incapable of self-sustaining employment by reason of an intellectual or physical disability; and (ii) chiefly dependent upon the policyholder or subscriber for support and maintenance. The proof of such incapacity and dependency shall be furnished to the insurer, hospital service plan corporation, or medical service plan corporation by the policyholder or subscriber within 31 days of the child's attainment of the limiting age and subsequently as may be required by the insurer or corporation, but not more frequently than annually after the child's attainment of the limiting age.

(b) All health benefit plans, as defined in G.S. 58-3-167, that provide that coverage of a dependent child shall terminate upon a change in enrollment of the child in a postsecondary educational institution shall provide for the continued eligibility of the dependent child during a medically necessary leave of absence from the postsecondary educational institution in accordance with all applicable requirements of Public Law 110-381, known as Michelle's Law. (1969, c. 745, s. 1; 1971, c. 1126, s. 1; 2009-382, s. 17; 2018-47, s. 7(a).)

§ 58-51-30. Policies to cover newborn infants, foster children, and adopted children.

(a) As used in this section:

- (1) "Foster child" means a minor (i) over whom a guardian has been appointed by the clerk of superior court of any county in North Carolina; or (ii) the primary or sole custody of whom has been assigned by order of a court of competent jurisdiction;
- (2) "Placement in the foster home" means physically residing with a person appointed as guardian or custodian of a foster child as long as that guardian or custodian has assumed the legal obligation for total or partial support of the foster child with the intent that the foster child reside with the guardian or custodian on more than a temporary or short-term basis.

(3) "Placement for adoption" has the same meaning as defined in G.S. 58-51-125(a)(2).

(b) Every health benefit plan, as defined in G.S. 58-51-115(a)(1), that provides benefits for any sickness, illness, or disability of any minor child or that provides benefits for any medical treatment or service furnished by a health care provider or institution to any minor child shall provide the benefits for those occurrences beginning with the moment of the child's birth if the birth occurs while the plan is in force. Every health benefit plan shall extend coverage to a newborn child without requirements for prior notification unless an additional premium charge to add the dependent is due. If an additional premium charge is due to cover the dependent, the health benefit plan shall cover the newborn child from the moment of birth if the newborn is enrolled within 30 days after the date of birth. Foster children and adopted children shall be treated the same as newborn infants and eligible for coverage on the same basis upon placement in the foster home or placement for adoption. Every health benefit plan shall extend coverage to a foster child or adopted child without requirements for prior notification unless an additional premium charge to add the foster child or adopted child is due. If an additional premium charge is due to cover the foster child or adopted child, the health benefit plan shall cover the foster child or adopted child upon placement in the foster home or placement for adoption if the foster child or adopted child is enrolled within 30 days after the placement in the foster home or placement for adoption.

(c) Benefits in such plans shall be the same for congenital defects or anomalies as are provided for most sicknesses or illnesses suffered by minor children that are covered by the plans. Benefits for congenital defects or anomalies shall specifically include, but not be limited to, all necessary treatment and care needed by individuals born with cleft lip or cleft palate.

(d) No plan shall be approved by the Commissioner under this Chapter that does not comply with this section.

(e) This section applies to insurers governed by Articles 1 through 63 of this Chapter and to corporations governed by Articles 65, 66, and 67 of this Chapter.

(f) This section and G.S. 58-51-125 shall be construed in pari materia. (1973, c. 345, ss. 1, 2; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1349; 1991, c. 644, s. 12; 1993, c. 504, s. 32; c. 553, s. 18; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 644, s. 2; 2001-334, s. 5; 2005-223, s. 3.)

§ 58-51-35. Insurers and others to afford coverage to children with an intellectual or physical disability.

(a) No insurance company licensed in this State pursuant to the provisions of Articles 1 through 64 of this Chapter and no corporation governed by the provisions of Articles 65 and 66 of this Chapter shall refuse to issue or deliver any individual or group accident and health insurance policy or hospital or medical service plan policy in this State which it is currently issuing for delivery in this State and which affords benefits or coverage for minor children of the applicant, by reason of an intellectual or physical disability of any minor children of the applicant; nor shall any such policy issued and delivered in this State carry a higher premium rate or charge or restrict or exclude coverage or benefits by reason of the intellectual or physical disability. The policy, however, may exclude benefits, otherwise payable for disability, hospitalization, or medical or other therapeutic expense directly and solely attributable to the intellectual or physical disability.

(b) The Commissioner shall revoke the license of any insurer or any corporation governed by the provisions of Articles 65 and 66 of this Chapter if it fails to comply with the provisions of this section.

(c) The provisions of this section apply to corporations governed by the provisions of Articles 65 and 66 of this Chapter. (1973, c. 754, ss. 1, 2; 1991, c. 720, s. 4; 2018-47, s. 7(b).)

§ 58-51-37. Pharmacy of choice.

(a) This section shall apply to all health benefit plans providing pharmaceutical services benefits, including prescription drugs, to any resident of North Carolina. This section shall also apply to insurance companies and health maintenance organizations that provide or administer coverages and benefits for prescription drugs. This section shall apply to pharmacy benefits managers with respect to 340B covered entities and 340B contract pharmacies, as defined in G.S. 58-56A-1. This section shall not apply to any entity that has its own facility, employs or contracts with physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and other health care personnel, and that dispenses prescription drugs from its own pharmacy to its employees and to enrollees of its health benefit plan; provided, however, this section shall apply to an entity otherwise excluded that contracts with an outside pharmacy or group of pharmacies to provide prescription drugs and services. This section shall not apply to any federal program, clinical trial program, hospital or other health care facility licensed pursuant to Chapter 131E or Chapter 122C of the General Statutes, when dispensing prescription drugs to its patients.

(b) As used in this section:

- (1) "Copayment" means a type of cost sharing whereby insured or covered persons pay a specified predetermined amount per unit of service with their insurer paying the remainder of the charge. The copayment is incurred at the time the service is used. The copayment may be a fixed or variable amount.
- (2) "Contract provider" means a pharmacy granted the right to provide prescription drugs and pharmacy services according to the terms of the insurer.
- (3) "Health benefit plan" is as that term is defined in G.S. 58-50-110(11).
- (4) "Insurer" means any entity that provides or offers a health benefit plan.
- (5) "Pharmacy" means a pharmacy registered with the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy.

(c) The terms of a health benefit plan shall not:

- (1) Prohibit or limit a resident of this State, who is eligible for reimbursement for pharmacy services as a participant or beneficiary of a health benefit plan, from selecting a pharmacy of his or her choice when the pharmacy has agreed to participate in the health benefit plan according to the terms offered by the insurer;
- (2) Deny a pharmacy the opportunity to participate as a contract provider under a health benefit plan if the pharmacy agrees to provide pharmacy services that meet the terms and requirements, including terms of reimbursement, of the insurer under a health benefit plan, provided that if the pharmacy is offered the opportunity to participate, it must participate or no provisions of G.S. 58-51-37 shall apply;
- (3) Impose upon a beneficiary of pharmacy services under a health benefit plan any copayment, fee, or condition that is not equally imposed upon all beneficiaries in the same benefit category, class, or copayment level under the health benefit plan when receiving services from a contract provider;
- (4) Impose a monetary advantage or penalty under a health benefit plan that would affect a beneficiary's choice of pharmacy. Monetary advantage or penalty

includes higher copayment, a reduction in reimbursement for services, or promotion of one participating pharmacy over another by these methods.

- (5) Reduce allowable reimbursement for pharmacy services to a beneficiary under a health benefit plan because the beneficiary selects a pharmacy of his or her choice, so long as that pharmacy has enrolled with the health benefit plan under the terms offered to all pharmacies in the plan coverage area; or
- (6) Require a beneficiary, as a condition of payment or reimbursement, to purchase pharmacy services, including prescription drugs, exclusively through a mail-order pharmacy.

(d) A pharmacy, by or through a pharmacist acting on its behalf as its employee, agent, or owner, may not waive, discount, rebate, or distort a copayment of any insurer, policy, or plan, or a beneficiary's coinsurance portion of a prescription drug coverage or reimbursement and if a pharmacy, by or through a pharmacist's acting on its behalf as its employee, agent or owner, provides a pharmacy service to an enrollee of a health benefit plan that meets the terms and requirements of the insurer under a health benefit plan, the pharmacy shall provide its pharmacy services to all enrollees of that health benefit plan on the same terms and requirements of the insurer. A violation of this subsection shall be a violation of the Pharmacy Practice Act subjecting the pharmacist as a licensee to disciplinary authority of the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy pursuant to G.S. 90-85.38.

(e) At least 60 days before the effective date of any health benefit plan providing reimbursement to North Carolina residents for prescription drugs, which restricts pharmacy participation, the entity providing the health benefit plan shall notify, in writing, all pharmacies within the geographical coverage area of the health benefit plan, and offer to the pharmacies the opportunity to participate in the health benefit plan. All pharmacies in the geographical coverage area of the plan shall be eligible to participate under identical reimbursement terms for providing pharmacy services, including prescription drugs. The entity providing the health benefit plan shall, through reasonable means, on a timely basis, and on regular intervals in order to effectuate the purposes of this section, inform the beneficiaries of the plan of the names and locations of pharmacies that are participating in the plan as providers of pharmacy services and prescription drugs. Additionally, participating pharmacies shall be entitled to announce their participation to their customers through a means acceptable to the pharmacy and the entity providing the health benefit plans. The pharmacy notification provisions of this section shall not apply when an individual or group is enrolled, but when the plan enters a particular county of the State.

(f) If rebates or marketing incentives are allowed to pharmacies or other dispensing entities providing services or benefits under a health benefit plan, these rebates or marketing incentives shall be offered on an equal basis to all pharmacies and other dispensing entities providing services or benefits under a health benefit plan when pharmacy services, including prescription drugs, are purchased in the same volume and under the same terms of payment. Nothing in this section shall prevent a pharmaceutical manufacturer or wholesale distributor of pharmaceutical products from providing special prices, marketing incentives, rebates, or discounts to different purchasers not prohibited by federal and State antitrust laws.

(g) Any entity or insurer providing a health benefit plan is subject to G.S. 58-2-70. A violation of this section shall subject the entity providing a health benefit plan to the sanctions of revocation, suspension, or refusal to renew license in the discretion of the Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 58-3-100.

(h) A violation of this section creates a civil cause of action for damages or injunctive relief in favor of any person or pharmacy aggrieved by the violation.

(i) The Commissioner shall not approve any health benefit plan providing pharmaceutical services which does not conform to this section.

(j) Any provision in a health benefit plan which is executed, delivered, or renewed, or otherwise contracted for in this State that is contrary to any provision of this section shall, to the extent of the conflict, be void.

(k) It shall be a violation of this section for any insurer or any person to provide any health benefit plan providing for pharmaceutical services to residents of this State that does not conform to the provisions of this section.

(l) An insurer's use of a lock-in program developed pursuant to G.S. 58-51-37.1 or G.S. 108A-68.2 is not a violation of this section. (1993, c. 293, s. 1; 2018-49, s. 3(c); 2018-145, s. 10; 2021-161, s. 4; 2023-134, s. 9E.23(a2).)

§ 58-51-37.1. Lock-in program for certain controlled substances.

(a) As used in this section, "covered substances" means any controlled substance identified as an opioid or benzodiazepine, excluding benzodiazepine sedative-hypnotics, contained in Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, unless one of the following conditions are met:

- (1) If the Department of Health and Human Services specifically identifies the opioid or benzodiazepine as a substance excluded from coverage by the Medicaid Beneficiary Management Lock-In Program described in its Outpatient Pharmacy Clinical Coverage Policy adopted in accordance with G.S. 108A-54.2, then the opioid or benzodiazepine is not a covered substance under this section.
- (2) If the Department of Health and Human Services specifically identifies a controlled substance contained in Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes other than an opioid or benzodiazepine as a controlled substance covered by the Medicaid Beneficiary Management Lock-In Program described in its Outpatient Pharmacy Clinical Coverage Policy adopted in accordance with G.S. 108A-54.2, then the controlled substance is a covered substance under this section.

(b) As used in this section, "lock-in program" means a requirement that an insured select a single prescriber and a single pharmacy for obtaining covered substances under a health benefit plan.

(c) An insurer may develop a lock-in program as part of a health benefit plan for insureds who meet any of the following criteria:

- (1) Have filled six or more prescriptions for covered substances in a period of two consecutive months.
- (2) Have received prescriptions for covered substances from three or more health care providers in a period of two consecutive months.
- (3) Are recommended to the insurer as a candidate for the lock-in program by a health care provider.

(d) A lock-in program developed pursuant to subsection (c) of this section shall comply with all of the following:

- (1) An insured shall not be subject to the lock-in program until the insurer has notified the insured in writing that the insured will be subject to the lock-in program.
 - (2) An insured subject to the lock-in program shall be given the opportunity to select a single prescriber and a single pharmacy from a list of prescribers and pharmacies participating in the health benefit plan provider network. For any insured who fails to select a single prescriber, the insurer shall use algorithmic guidelines to assign the insured a single prescriber from a list of prescribers participating in the health benefit plan provider network. For any insured who fails to select a single pharmacy, the insurer shall use algorithmic guidelines to assign the insured a single pharmacy from a list of pharmacies participating in the health benefit plan provider network.
 - (3) An insured shall not be required to use the single prescriber or single pharmacy selected for the lock-in program to obtain prescriptions drugs covered by the health benefit plan that are not covered substances. An insured who is subject to a lock-in program retains all rights under G.S. 58-51-37 to obtain prescription drugs covered by a health benefit plan that are not covered substances.
- (e) An insurer's use of a lock-in program developed pursuant to subsection (c) of this section is not a violation under G.S. 58-51-37. (2018-49, s. 3(b).)

§ 58-51-38. Direct access to obstetrician-gynecologists.

(a) Each health benefit plan shall allow each female plan participant or beneficiary age 13 or older direct access within the health benefit plan, without prior referral, to the health care services of an obstetrician-gynecologist participating in the health benefit plan, within the benefits provided under that health benefit plan pertaining to obstetrician-gynecologist services.

For purposes of this section:

- (1) "Health benefit plan" means an HMO subscriber contract or any preferred provider, exclusive provider, or other managed care arrangement offered under a health benefit plan, as defined in G.S. 58-50-110(11).
 - (2) "Health care services" means the full scope of medically necessary services provided by the participating obstetrician-gynecologist in the care of or related to the female reproductive system and breasts, and in performing annual screening, counseling, and immunization for disorders and diseases in accordance with the most current published recommendations of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and includes services provided by nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, and certified nurse midwives in collaboration with the obstetrician-gynecologist in the care of the participant or beneficiary.
 - (3) "Benefits" are those medical services or other items to which an individual is entitled under the terms of her contract with a health benefit plan, as approved by the Department of Insurance.
- (b) Each health benefit plan shall inform female participants and beneficiaries in writing of the provisions of this section. The information shall be provided in benefit handbooks and materials and enrollment materials. (1995, c. 63, s. 1.)

§ 58-51-40. Insurers and others to afford coverage for active medical treatment in tax-supported institutions.

(a) Whenever any policy of insurance governed by Articles 1 through 64 of this Chapter provides for benefits for charges of hospitals or physicians, the policy shall provide for payments of benefits for charges made for medical care rendered in or by duly licensed State tax-supported institutions, including charges for medical care of cerebral palsy, other orthopedic and crippling disabilities, mental and nervous diseases or disorders, intellectual disability, alcoholism and drug or chemical dependency, and respiratory illness, on a basis no less favorable than the basis which would apply had the medical care been rendered in or by any other public or private institution or provider. The term "State tax-supported institutions" includes community mental health centers and other health clinics which are certified as Medicaid providers.

(b) No policy shall exclude payment for charges of a duly licensed State tax-supported institution because of its being a specialty facility for one particular type of illness nor because it does not have an operating room and related equipment for the performance of surgery, but it is not required that benefits be payable for domiciliary or custodial care, rehabilitation, training, schooling, or occupational therapy.

(c) The restrictions and regulations of this section do not apply to any policy which is individually underwritten or provided for a specific individual and the members of the individual's family as a nongroup policy but apply to any group policy of insurance governed by Articles 1 through 64 of this Chapter. (1975, c. 345, s. 1; 1981, c. 816, ss. 1, 2; 2018-47, s. 7(c).)

§ 58-51-45. Policies to be issued to any person possessing the sickle cell trait or hemoglobin C trait.

No insurance company licensed in this State pursuant to the provisions of Articles 1 through 64 of this Chapter shall refuse to issue or deliver any policy (regardless of whether any of such policies shall be defined as individual, family, group, blanket, franchise, industrial or otherwise) which is currently being issued for delivery in this State, and which affords benefits or coverage for any medical treatment or service authorized or permitted to be furnished by a hospital, clinic, family health plan, neighborhood health plan, health maintenance organization, physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner or any medical service facility or personnel by reason of the fact that the person to be insured possesses sickle cell trait or hemoglobin C trait, nor shall any such policy issued and delivered in this State carry a higher premium rate or charge by reason of the fact that the person to be insured possesses said trait. (1975, c. 599, s. 1.)

§ 58-51-50. Coverage for chemical dependency treatment.

(a) As used in this section, the term "chemical dependency" means the pathological use or abuse of alcohol or other drugs in a manner or to a degree that produces an impairment in personal, social or occupational functioning and which may, but need not, include a pattern of tolerance and withdrawal.

(b) Every insurer that writes a policy or contract of group or blanket health insurance or group or blanket accident and health insurance that is issued, renewed, or amended on or after January 1, 1985, shall offer to its insureds benefits for the necessary care and treatment of chemical dependency that are not less favorable than benefits for physical illness generally. Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, benefits for treatment of chemical dependency shall be subject to the same durational limits, dollar limits, deductibles, and coinsurance factors as are benefits for physical illness generally.

(c) Every group policy or group contract of insurance that provides benefits for chemical dependency treatment and that provides total annual benefits for all illnesses in excess of eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) is subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The policy or contract shall provide, for each 12-month period, a minimum benefit of eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) for the necessary care and treatment of chemical dependency.
- (2) The policy or contract shall provide a minimum benefit of sixteen thousand dollars (\$16,000) for the necessary care and treatment of chemical dependency for the life of the policy or contract.

(d) Provisions for benefits for necessary care and treatment of chemical dependency in group policies or group contracts of insurance shall provide benefit payments for the following providers of necessary care and treatment of chemical dependency:

- (1) The following units of a general hospital licensed under Article 5 of General Statutes Chapter 131E:
 - a. Chemical dependency units in facilities licensed after October 1, 1984;
 - b. Medical units;
 - c. Psychiatric units; and
- (2) The following facilities or programs licensed after July 1, 1984, under Article 2 of General Statutes Chapter 122C:
 - a. Chemical dependency units in psychiatric hospitals;
 - b. Chemical dependency hospitals;
 - c. Residential chemical dependency treatment facilities;
 - d. Social setting detoxification facilities or programs;
 - e. Medical detoxification or programs; and
- (3) Duly licensed physicians and duly licensed practicing psychologists and certified professionals working under the direct supervision of such physicians or psychologists in facilities described in (1) and (2) above and in day/night programs or outpatient treatment facilities licensed after July 1, 1984, under Article 2 of General Statutes Chapter 122C.

Provided, however, that nothing in this subsection shall prohibit any policy or contract of insurance from requiring the most cost effective treatment setting to be utilized by the person undergoing necessary care and treatment for chemical dependency.

(e) Coverage for chemical dependency treatment as described in this section shall not be applicable to any group policy holder or group contract holder who rejects the coverage in writing.

(f) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, a group health benefit plan that covers both medical and surgical benefits and chemical dependency treatment benefits shall, with respect to the chemical dependency treatment benefits, comply with all applicable standards of Subtitle B of Title V of Public Law 110-343, known as the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008.

(g) Subsection (f) of this section applies only to a group health benefit plan covering a large employer as defined in G.S. 58-68-25(a)(10). (1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1110, s. 7; 1985, c. 589, s. 43(a), (b); 1989, c. 175, s. 1; 1991, c. 720, s. 64; 2009-382, s. 20.)

§ 58-51-55. No discrimination against mentally ill or chemically dependent individuals.

- (a) Definitions. – As used in this section, the term:

- (1) "Mental illness" has the same meaning as defined in G.S. 122C-3(21), with a mental disorder defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-5, or a subsequent edition published by the American Psychiatric Association, except those mental disorders coded in the DSM-5 or subsequent editions as autism spectrum disorder (299.00), substance-related disorders (291.0 through 292.9 and 303.0 through 305.9), those coded as sexual dysfunctions not due to organic disease (302.70 through 302.79), and those coded as "V" codes.
- (2) "Chemical dependency" has the same meaning as defined in G.S. 58-51-50, with a mental disorder defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-5, or subsequent editions published by the American Psychiatric Association.

(b) Coverage of Physical Illness. – No insurance company licensed in this State under this Chapter shall, solely because an individual to be insured has or had a mental illness or chemical dependency:

- (1) Refuse to issue or deliver to that individual any policy that affords benefits or coverages for any medical treatment or service for physical illness or injury;
- (2) Have a higher premium rate or charge for physical illness or injury coverages or benefits for that individual; or
- (3) Reduce physical illness or injury coverages or benefits for that individual.

(b1) [Expired October 1, 2001.]

(c) Chemical Dependency Coverage Not Required. – Nothing in this section requires an insurer to offer coverage for chemical dependency, except as provided in G.S. 58-51-50.

(d) Applicability. – This section applies only to group health insurance contracts, other than excepted benefits as defined in G.S. 58-68-25. For purposes of this section, "group health insurance contracts" include MEWAs, as defined in G.S. 58-50A-1.

(e) Nothing in this section requires an insurer to cover treatment or studies leading to or in connection with sex changes or modifications and related care. (1989, c. 369, s. 3; 1991, c. 720, s. 81; 1997-259, s. 21; 1999-132, s. 4.2; 2007-268, s. 1; 2015-271, s. 3; 2019-202, s. 8; 2020-69, s. 3(f).)

§ 58-51-57. Coverage for mammograms and cervical cancer screening.

(a) Every policy or contract of accident or health insurance, and every preferred provider benefit plan under G.S. 58-50-56, that is issued, renewed, or amended on or after January 1, 1992, shall provide coverage for examinations and laboratory tests for the screening for the early detection of cervical cancer and for low-dose screening mammography. The same deductibles, coinsurance, and other limitations as apply to similar services covered under the policy, contract, or plan shall apply to coverage for examinations and laboratory tests for the screening for the early detection of cervical cancer and low-dose screening mammography.

(a1) As used in this section, "examinations and laboratory tests for the screening for the early detection of cervical cancer" means conventional PAP smear screening, liquid-based cytology, and human papilloma virus (HPV) detection methods for women with equivocal findings on cervical cytologic analysis that are subject to the approval of and have been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

(b) As used in this section, "low-dose screening mammography" means a radiologic procedure for the early detection of breast cancer provided to an asymptomatic woman using

equipment dedicated specifically for mammography, including a physician's interpretation of the results of the procedure.

(c) Coverage for low-dose screening mammography shall be provided as follows:

- (1) One or more mammograms a year, as recommended by a physician, for any woman who is at risk for breast cancer. For purposes of this subdivision, a woman is at risk for breast cancer if any one or more of the following is true:
 - a. The woman has a personal history of breast cancer;
 - b. The woman has a personal history of biopsy-proven benign breast disease;
 - c. The woman's mother, sister, or daughter has or has had breast cancer; or
 - d. The woman has not given birth prior to the age of 30;
- (2) One baseline mammogram for any woman 35 through 39 years of age, inclusive;
- (3) A mammogram every other year for any woman 40 through 49 years of age, inclusive, or more frequently upon recommendation of a physician; and
- (4) A mammogram every year for any woman 50 years of age or older.

(d) Reimbursement for a mammogram authorized under this section shall be made only if the facility in which the mammogram was performed meets mammography accreditation standards established by the North Carolina Medical Care Commission.

(e) Coverage for the screening for the early detection of cervical cancer shall be in accordance with the most recently published American Cancer Society guidelines or guidelines adopted by the North Carolina Advisory Committee on Cancer Coordination and Control. Coverage shall include the examination, the laboratory fee, and the physician's interpretation of the laboratory results. Reimbursements for laboratory fees shall be made only if the laboratory meets accreditation standards adopted by the North Carolina Medical Care Commission. (1991, c. 490, s. 1; 1997-519, s. 3.3; 2003-186, s. 2.)

§ 58-51-58. Coverage for prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests.

(a) Every policy or contract of accident and health insurance, and every preferred provider benefit plan under G.S. 58-50-56, that is issued, renewed, or amended on or after January 1, 1994, shall provide coverage for prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests or equivalent tests for the presence of prostate cancer. The same deductibles, coinsurance, and other limitations as apply to similar services covered under the policy, contract, or plan shall apply to coverage for prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests or equivalent tests for the presence of prostate cancer.

(b) As used in this section, "prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests or equivalent tests for the presence of prostate cancer" means serological tests for determining the presence of prostate cytoplasmic protein (PSA) and the generation of antibodies to it, as a novel marker for prostatic disease.

(c) Coverage for prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests or equivalent tests for the presence of prostate cancer shall be provided when recommended by a physician. (1993, c. 269, s. 1; 1997-519, s. 3.4.)

§ 58-51-59. Coverage of certain prescribed drugs for cancer treatment.

(a) No policy or contract of accident or health insurance, and no preferred provider benefit plan under G.S. 58-50-56, that is issued, renewed, or amended on or after January 1, 1994, and that provides coverage for prescribed drugs approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration for

the treatment of certain types of cancer shall exclude coverage of any drug on the basis that the drug has been prescribed for the treatment of a type of cancer for which the drug has not been approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration. The drug, however, must be approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration and must have been proven effective and accepted for the treatment of the specific type of cancer for which the drug has been prescribed in any one of the following established reference compendia:

- (1) The National Comprehensive Cancer Network Drugs & Biologics Compendium;
- (2) The Micromedex DrugDex System;
- (3) The Elsevier Gold Standard's Clinical Pharmacology; or
- (4) Any other authoritative compendia as recognized periodically by the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, coverage shall not be required for any experimental or investigational drugs or any drug that the federal Food and Drug Administration has determined to be contraindicated for treatment of the specific type of cancer for which the drug has been prescribed.

(c) This section shall apply only to cancer drugs and nothing in this section shall be construed, expressly or by implication, to create, impair, alter, limit, notify, enlarge, abrogate, or prohibit reimbursement for drugs used in the treatment of any other disease or condition. (1993, c. 506, s. 4.1; 1997-519, s. 3.5; 2009-170, s. 1; 2023-133, s. 2(a).)

§ 58-51-60. Meaning of term "preexisting conditions" in certain policies.

At the time of issuing any new policy of individual or family hospitalization insurance or individual accident and health insurance to insureds over age 65, the term "preexisting conditions," or its equivalent in said policy shall include only conditions specifically eliminated by rider. (1955, c. 850, s. 5.)

§ 58-51-61. Coverage for certain treatment for diabetes.

(a) Every policy or contract of accident or health insurance, and every preferred provider benefit plan under G.S. 58-50-56, that is issued, renewed, or amended on or after October 1, 1997, shall provide coverage for medically appropriate and necessary services, including diabetes outpatient self-management training and educational services, and equipment, supplies, medications, and laboratory procedures used to treat diabetes. Diabetes outpatient self-management training and educational services shall be provided by a physician or a health care professional designated by the physician. The insurer shall determine who shall provide and be reimbursed for the diabetes outpatient self-management training and educational services. The same deductibles, coinsurance, and other limitations as apply to similar services covered under the policy, contract, or plan shall apply to the diabetes coverage required under this section.

(b) For the purposes of this section, "physician" is a person licensed to practice in this State under Article 1 or Article 7 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes. (1997-225, s. 1; 1997-519, s. 3.11.)

§ 58-51-62. Coverage for reconstructive breast surgery following mastectomy.

(a) Every policy or contract of accident and health insurance, and every preferred provider benefit plan under G.S. 58-50-56 that provides coverage for mastectomy shall provide coverage for reconstructive breast surgery following a mastectomy. The coverage shall include coverage for all

stages and revisions of reconstructive breast surgery performed on a nondiseased breast to establish symmetry if reconstructive surgery on a diseased breast is performed, as well as coverage for prostheses and physical complications in all stages of mastectomy, including lymphedemas. The same deductibles, coinsurance, and other limitations as apply to similar services covered under the policy, contract, or plan shall apply to coverage for reconstructive breast surgery. Reconstruction of the nipple/areolar complex following a mastectomy is covered without regard to the lapse of time between the mastectomy and the reconstruction, subject to the approval of the treating physician.

(b) As used in this section, the following terms have the meanings indicated:

- (1) "Mastectomy" means the surgical removal of all or part of a breast as a result of breast cancer or breast disease.
- (2) "Reconstructive breast surgery" means surgery performed as a result of a mastectomy to reestablish symmetry between the two breasts, and includes reconstruction of the mastectomy site, creation of a new breast mound, and creation of a new nipple/areolar complex. "Reconstructive breast surgery" also includes augmentation mammoplasty, reduction mammoplasty, and mastopexy of the nondiseased breast.

(c) A policy, contract, or plan subject to this section shall not:

- (1) Deny coverage described in subsection (a) of this section on the basis that the coverage is for cosmetic surgery;
- (2) Deny to a woman eligibility or continued eligibility to enroll or to renew coverage under the terms of the contract, policy, or plan, solely for the purpose of avoiding the requirements of this section;
- (3) Provide monetary payments or rebates to a woman to encourage her to accept less than the minimum protections available under this section;
- (4) Penalize or otherwise reduce or limit the reimbursement of an attending provider because the provider provided care to an individual participant or beneficiary in accordance with this section; or
- (5) Provide incentives, monetary or otherwise, to an attending provider to induce the provider to provide care to an individual participant or beneficiary in a manner inconsistent with this section.

(d) Written notice of the availability of the coverage provided by this section shall be delivered to every policyholder under an individual policy, contract, or plan and to every certificate holder under a group policy, contract, or plan upon initial coverage under the policy, contract, or plan and annually thereafter. The notice required by this subsection may be included as a part of any yearly informational packet sent to the policyholder or certificate holder. (1997-312, s. 1; 1997-456, s. 40(a); 1997-519, s. 3.9; 1999-351, s. 3.1; 2001-334, s. 13.1.)

§ 58-51-63. Coverage for abortions not allowed in plans offered through Exchange.

(a) Pursuant to the authority granted to states under 42 U.S.C. § 18023(a), no qualified health plan offered through an Exchange created under Subchapter III of Chapter 157 of Title 42 of the U.S. Code and operating within this State shall include coverage for abortion services.

(b) The coverage limitation in subsection (a) of this section shall not apply to an abortion performed when the pregnancy is the result of an act of rape or incest or the life of the mother is endangered by a physical disorder, physical illness, or physical injury, including a life-endangering physical condition caused by or arising from the pregnancy itself. (2013-366, s. 2(a).)

§ 58-51-65. Industrial sick benefit insurance defined.

Industrial sick benefit insurance is hereby defined as that form of insurance for which premiums are payable weekly and which provides for the payment of a weekly indemnity on account of sickness or accident in addition to a benefit in case of death. Such death benefit shall not exceed one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150.00). There shall be a provision for the payment of weekly premium, eighty percent (80%) of which shall be allocated for the purchase of sick and accident coverages and twenty percent (20%) thereof for the purchase of death benefits. (1945, c. 385.)

§ 58-51-70. Industrial sick benefit insurance; provisions.

Policies issued under the industrial sick benefit plan shall contain the substance of provisions contained in G.S. 58-51-15 and in addition shall contain the following:

- (1) A provision for grace for the payment of the additional premium or assessment or proportion thereof for such death benefits of not less than four weeks during which period the death benefit shall continue in force;
- (2) A provision for incontestability of the death benefit coverage after not more than two years except for
 - a. Nonpayment of premiums, and
 - b. Misstatement of age;
- (3) A provision that the death benefit is noncancellable by the company except for nonpayment of premium.

The Commissioner may approve any form of certificate to be issued under the industrial sick benefit plan which omits or modifies any of the provisions hereinbefore required, if he deems such omission or modification suitable for the character of such insurance and not unjust to the persons insured thereunder. (1945, c. 385; 1953, c. 1095, s. 4; 1979, c. 755, s. 14.)

§ 58-51-75. Blanket accident and health insurance defined.

(a) Any policy or contract of insurance against death or injury resulting from accident or from accidental means which insures a group of persons conforming to the requirements of one of the following subdivisions (1) to (7), inclusive, shall be deemed a blanket accident policy. Any policy or contract which insures a group of persons conforming to the requirements of one of the following subdivisions (3), (5), (6) or (7) against total or partial disability, excluding such disability from accident or from accidental means, shall be deemed a blanket health insurance policy. Any policy or contract of insurance which combines the coverage of blanket accident insurance and of blanket health insurance on such a group of persons shall be deemed a blanket accident and health insurance policy:

- (1) Under a policy or contract issued to any common carrier or to any operator, owner, or lessee of a means of transportation, who or which shall be deemed the policyholder, covering a group defined as all persons or all persons of a class who may become passengers on the common carrier or the means of transportation.
- (2) Under a policy or contract issued to an employer, or the trustee of a fund established by the employer, who shall be deemed the policyholder, covering any group of employees defined by reference to exceptional hazards incident to

- such employment, insuring such employee against death or bodily injury resulting while, or from, being exposed to such exceptional hazard.
- (3) Under a policy or contract issued to a college, school or other institution of learning or to the head or principal thereof, who or which shall be deemed the policyholder.
 - (4) Under a policy or contract issued in the name of any volunteer fire department, emergency medical service, rescue first aid, civil defense, or any other such volunteer organization, which shall be deemed the policyholder, covering any group of members or other participants defined by reference to specified hazards incident to any activities or operations sponsored or supervised by such policyholder.
 - (5) Under a policy or contract issued to and in the name of an incorporated or unincorporated association of persons having a common interest or calling, which association shall be deemed the policyholder, having not less than 25 members, and formed for purposes other than obtaining insurance, covering all of the members of such association.
 - (6) Under a policy or contract issued to the head of a household, who shall be deemed the policyholder, whereunder the benefits thereof shall provide for the payment by the insurer of amounts for expenses incurred by the policyholder on account of hospitalization or medical or surgical aid for the policyholder, his or her spouse, his or her child or children, or other persons chiefly dependent on him or her for support and maintenance.
 - (7) Under a policy or contract issued to or in the name of any municipal or county recreation commission or department, sports team, league, tournament, or sponsor thereof, which shall be deemed the policyholder, covering participants, members, coaches, counselors, employees, officials, or supervisors defined by reference to specified hazards incident to activities or operations sponsored or supervised by such policyholder or on the premises of such policyholder.
 - (8) Under a policy or contract issued to any incorporated or unincorporated religious, charitable, recreational, educational, athletic, or civic organization or branch thereof, which shall be deemed the policyholder, covering any group of members, participants, or volunteers defined by reference to specified hazards incident to activities or operations sponsored or supervised by such policyholder or on the premises of such policyholder.
 - (9) Under a policy or contract issued to any overnight, day, religious, equestrian, adventure, wilderness, athletic, or other camp, or the sponsor thereof, which shall be deemed the policyholder, covering any group of campers, participants, counselors, employees, volunteers, or supervisors defined by reference to specified hazards incident to activities or operations sponsored or supervised by such policyholder or on the premises of such policyholder.
 - (10) Under a policy or contract issued to any bank, credit union, or other financial institution, which shall be deemed the policyholder, to insure any group of account holders or members of the policyholder and as defined by reference in the policy or contract, in which premiums for such insurance are paid by the policyholder, as authorized by the account holder or member from account holder or member funds on deposit with the policyholder, collected from the

account holders or members by way of account billing or member billing, or by the policyholder and account holders jointly.

(11) Any other risk or class of risks which, in the discretion of the Commissioner, may be properly eligible for blanket accident, health, or accident and health insurance. The discretion of the Commissioner may be exercised on an individual risk basis or class of risks or both after the Commissioner has made the following findings:

a. The issuance of the blanket policy is not contrary to the best interest of the public.

b. The issuance of the blanket policy would result in economies of acquisition or administration.

c. The benefits are reasonable in relation to the premiums charged.

(b) All benefits under any blanket accident, blanket health or blanket accident and health insurance policy shall be payable to the person insured, or to his designated beneficiary or beneficiaries, or to his estate, or to a person or persons chiefly dependent upon the person insured for support and maintenance, except that if the person insured be a minor, such benefits may be made payable to his parent, guardian, or other person actually supporting the minor.

(c) Nothing contained in this section shall be deemed to affect the legal liability of policyholders for the death of or injury to, any such member of such group. (1945, c. 385; 1947, c. 721; 1953, c. 1095, s. 5; 1961, c. 603; 2013-199, s. 19.)

§ 58-51-80. Group accident and health insurance defined.

(a) Any policy or contract of insurance against death or injury resulting from accident or from accidental means which covers more than one person except blanket accident policies as defined in G.S. 58-51-75, shall be deemed a group accident insurance policy. Any policy or contract which insures against disablement, disease or sickness of the insured (excluding disablement which results from accident or from accidental means) and which covers more than one person, except blanket health insurance policies as defined in G.S. 58-51-75, shall be deemed a group health insurance policy or contract. Any policy or contract of insurance which combines the coverage of group accident insurance and of group health insurance shall be deemed a group accident and health insurance policy. No policy or contract of group accident, group health or group accident and health insurance, and no certificates thereunder, shall be delivered or issued for delivery in this State unless it conforms to the requirements of subsection (b).

(b) No policy or contract of group accident, group health or group accident and health insurance shall be delivered or issued for delivery in this State unless the group of persons thereby insured conforms to the requirements of the following subdivisions:

(1) Under a policy issued to an employer, principal, or to the trustee of a fund established by an employer or two or more employers in the same industry or kind of business, or by a principal or two or more principals in the same industry or kind of business, which employer, principal, or trustee shall be deemed the policyholder, covering, except as hereinafter provided, only employees, or agents, of any class or classes thereof determined by conditions pertaining to employment, or agency, for amounts of insurance based upon some plan which will preclude individual selection. The premium may be paid by the employer, by the employer and the employees jointly, or by the employee; and where the relationship of principal and agent exists, the premium may be paid by the

principal, by the principal and agents, jointly, or by the agents. If the premium is paid by the employer and the employees jointly, or by the principal and agents jointly, or by the employees, or by the agents, the group shall be structured on an actuarially sound basis.

- (1a) Under a policy issued to an association or to a trust or to the trustee or trustees of a fund established, created, or maintained for the benefit of members of one or more associations. The association or associations shall have at the outset a minimum of 500 persons and shall have been organized and maintained in good faith for purposes other than that of obtaining insurance; shall have been in active existence for at least five years; and shall have a constitution and bylaws that provide that (i) the association or associations hold regular meetings not less than annually to further purposes of the members; (ii) except for credit unions, the association or associations collect dues or solicit contributions from members; and (iii) the members, other than associate members, have voting privileges and representation on the governing board and committees. The policy is subject to the following requirements:
- a. The policy may insure members of the association or associations, employees of the association or associations, or employees of members, or one or more of the preceding or all of any class or classes for the benefit of persons other than the employee's employer.
 - b. The premium for the policy shall be paid from funds contributed by the association or associations, or by employer members, or by both, or from funds contributed by the covered persons or from both the covered persons and the association, associations, or employer members. The premium rates for each association policy shall be developed, and applied to the certificates thereunder, on an actuarially sound basis.
 - c. Repealed by Session Laws 1997-259, s. 8.
- (1b) Under a policy issued to a creditor as defined in G.S. 58-57-5 who shall be deemed the policyholder, to insure debtors as defined in G.S. 58-57-5 of the creditor to provide indemnity for payments becoming due on a specific loan or other credit transaction as defined in G.S. 58-51-100, with or without insurance against death by accident, subject to the following requirements:
- a. The debtors eligible for insurance under the policy shall be all of the debtors of the creditor whose indebtedness is repayable in installments, or all of any class or classes thereof determined by conditions pertaining to the indebtedness or to the purchase giving rise to the indebtedness. The policy may provide that the term "debtors" shall include the debtors of one or more subsidiary corporations, and the debtors of one or more affiliated corporations, proprietors or partnerships if the business of the policyholder and of such affiliated corporations, proprietors or partnerships is under common control through stock ownership, contract or otherwise.
 - b. The premium for the policy shall be paid from the creditor's funds, from charges collected from the insured debtors, or from both. A policy on which part or all of the premium is to be derived from the collection from the insured debtors or identifiable charges not required of

uninsured debtors shall not include, in the class or classes of debtors eligible for insurance, debtors under obligations outstanding at its date of issue without evidence of individual insurability unless the group is structured on an actuarially sound basis. A policy on which no part of the premium is to be derived from the collection of such identifiable charges must insure all eligible debtors, or all except any as to whom evidence of individual insurability is not satisfactory to the insurer.

- c. The policy may be issued only if the group of eligible debtors is then receiving new entrants at the rate of at least 100 persons yearly, or may reasonably be expected to receive at least 100 new entrants during the first policy year, and only if the policy reserves to the insurer the right to require evidence of individual insurability if less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the new entrants become insured.
- d. Premiums for this coverage shall be actuarially equivalent to the rates authorized under Article 57 of Chapter 58 of the General Statutes for credit accident and health insurance.

(1c) Under a policy issued to a Path 2 MEWA pursuant to Article 50A.

(2), (3) Repealed by Session Laws 1997-259, s. 8.

(c) The term "employees" as used in this section shall be deemed to include, for the purposes of insurance hereunder, employees of a single employer, the officers, managers, and employees of the employer and of subsidiary or affiliated corporations of a corporation employer, and the individual proprietors, partners, and employees of individuals and firms of which the business is controlled by the insured employer through stock ownership, contract or otherwise. With the exception of disability income insurance, employees shall be added to the group coverage no later than 90 days after their first day of employment. Employment shall be considered continuous and not be considered broken except for unexcused absences from work for reasons other than illness or injury. The term "employee" is defined as a nonseasonal person who works on a full-time basis, with a normal work week of 30 or more hours and who is otherwise eligible for coverage, but does not include a person who works on a part-time, temporary, or substitute basis. The term "employer" as used herein may be deemed to include the State of North Carolina, any county, municipality or corporation, or the proper officers, as such, of any unincorporated municipality or any department or subdivision of the State, county, such corporation, or municipality determined by conditions pertaining to the employment. When determining employee eligibility for a large employer, as defined in G.S. 58-68-25(10), an individual proprietor, owner, or operator shall be defined as an "employee" for the purpose of obtaining coverage under the employee group health plan and shall not be held to a minimum workweek requirement as imposed on other eligible employees.

(d) The term "agents" as used in this section shall be deemed to include, for the purposes of insurance hereunder, agents of a single principal who are under contract to devote all, or substantially all, of their time in rendering personal services for such principal, for a commission or other fixed or ascertainable compensation.

(e) The benefits payable under any policy or contract of group accident, group health and group accident and health insurance shall be payable to the employees, or agents, or to some beneficiary or beneficiaries designated by the employee or agent, other than the employer or principal, but if there is no designated beneficiary as to all or any part of the insurance at the death of the employee or agent, then the amount of insurance payable for which there is no designated

beneficiary shall be payable to the estate of the employee or agent, except that the insurer may in such case, at its option, pay such insurance to any one or more of the following surviving relatives of the employee or agent: wife, husband, mother, father, child, or children, brothers or sisters; and except that payment of benefits for expenses incurred on account of hospitalization or medical or surgical aid, as provided in subsection (f), may be made by the insurer to the hospital or other person or persons furnishing such aid. Payment so made shall discharge the insurer's obligation with respect to the amount of insurance so paid.

(f) Any policy or contract of group accident, group health or group accident and health insurance may include provisions for the payment by the insurer of benefits to the employee or agent of the insured group, on account of hospitalization or medical or surgical aid for himself, his spouse, his child or children, or other persons chiefly dependent upon him for support and maintenance.

(g) Any policy or contract of group accident, group health or group accident and health insurance may provide for readjustment of the rate of premium based on the experience thereunder at the end of the first year, or at any time during any subsequent year based upon at least 12 months of experience: Provided that any such readjustment after the first year shall not be made any more frequently than once every six months. Any rate adjustment must be preceded by a 45-day notice to the contract holder before the effective date of any rate increase or any policy benefit revision. A notice of nonrenewal shall be given to the contract holder 45 days prior to termination. Any refund under any plan for readjustment of the rate of premium based on the experience under group policies and any dividend paid under the policies may be used to reduce the employer's or principal's contribution to group insurance for the employees of the employer, or the agents of the principal, and the excess over the contribution by the employer, or principal, shall be applied by the employer, or principal, for the sole benefit of the employees or agents.

(h) Nothing contained in this section applies to any contract issued by any corporation defined in Article 65 of this Chapter. (1945, c. 385; 1947, c. 721; 1951, c. 282; 1953, c. 1095, ss. 6, 7; 1987, c. 752, s. 19; 1989, c. 485, s. 41; c. 775, ss. 1, 2; 1991, c. 644, s. 11; c. 720, s. 88; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 837, s. 4; 1993, c. 408, ss. 3, 3.1; c. 409, s. 14; 1995, c. 507, ss. 23A.1(c), 23A.1(d); 1997-259, ss. 8, 9; 2000-132, s. 1; 2003-221, s. 12; 2005-223, ss. 1(a), 2(c); 2019-202, s. 4(a).)

§ 58-51-81. Group accident and health insurance for public school students.

(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 58-51-80, a policy of group accident, health, or accident and health insurance may be delivered or issued to a local board of education or to any of its schools, as policyholder, covering only students for amounts of insurance based upon some plan that will preclude individual selection. The premium may be paid by the board, jointly by the board and the students or any other persons on behalf of the students, or by the students and any other persons on behalf of the students. In addition to the authority granted in G.S. 115C-47(6), any board may establish fees for the payment of premiums by or on behalf of the covered students.

(b) Entities subject to Articles 65 and 67 of this Chapter may provide their products in the same manner described in subsection (a) of this section. (1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 716, s. 1.)

§ 58-51-85. Group or blanket accident and health insurance; approval of forms and filing of rates.

No policy of group or blanket accident, health or accident and health insurance shall be delivered or issued for delivery in this State unless the form of the policy contracts including the

master policy contract, the individual certificates thereunder, the applications for the contract, and a schedule of the premium rates pertaining to such form or forms, have been filed with and the forms approved by the Commissioner. (1945, c. 385; 1991, c. 720, s. 34.)

§ 58-51-90. Definition of franchise accident and health insurance.

Accident and health insurance on a franchise plan is hereby declared to be that form of accident and health insurance issued to five or more employees of any corporation, copartnership or individual employer or any governmental corporation, agency or department thereof, or 10 or more members of any trade or professional association or of a labor union or of any other association where such association or union has a constitution or bylaws and is formed in good faith for purposes other than that of obtaining insurance, where such persons, with or without their dependents, are issued the same form of an individual policy varying only as to amounts and kinds of coverage applied for by such persons, under an arrangement whereby the premiums on such policies may be paid to the insurer periodically by the employer, with or without payroll deductions, or by the association for its members, or by some designated person acting on behalf of such employer or association. The provisions of this section shall not be construed so as to repeal G.S. 58-51-75 and 58-51-80 or any parts thereof. (1947, c. 721; 1961, c. 646.)

§ 58-51-95. Approval by Commissioner of forms, classification and rates; hearing; exceptions.

(a) No policy of insurance against loss or expense from the sickness, or from the bodily injury or death by accident of the insured shall be issued or delivered to any person in this State nor shall any application, rider or endorsement be used in connection therewith until a copy of the form thereof and of the classification of risks and the premium rates, or, in the case of cooperatives or assessment companies the estimated cost pertaining thereto, have been filed with the Commissioner.

(b) No such policy shall be issued, nor shall any application, rider or endorsement be used in connection therewith, until the expiration of 90 days after it has been so filed unless the Commissioner shall sooner give his written approval thereto.

(c) The Commissioner may within 90 days after the filing of any such form, disapprove such form

(1) If the benefits provided therein are unreasonable in relation to the premium charged, or

(2) If it contains a provision or provisions which are unjust, unfair, inequitable, misleading, deceptive or encourage misrepresentation of such policy.

(d) If the Commissioner shall notify the insurer which has filed any such form that it does not comply with the provisions of this section or sections, it shall be unlawful thereafter for such insurer to issue such form or use it in connection with any policy. In such notice the Commissioner shall specify the reasons for his disapproval and state that a hearing will be granted within 20 days after request in writing by the insurer.

(e) The Commissioner may at any time, after a hearing of which not less than 20 days' written notice shall have been given to the insurer, withdraw his approval of any such form on any of the grounds stated in this section. It shall be unlawful for the insurer to issue such form or use it in connection with any policy after the effective date of such withdrawal of approval. The notice of any hearing called under this paragraph shall specify the matters to be considered at such hearing and any decision affirming disapproval or directing withdrawal of approval under this section shall

be in writing and shall specify the reasons therefor: Provided, that the provisions of this section shall not apply to workers' compensation insurance, accidental death or disability benefits issued supplementary to life insurance or annuity contracts, medical expense benefits under liability policies or to group accident and health insurance.

(f) An insurer may revise rates chargeable on policies subject to this section, other than noncancellable policies, with the approval of the Commissioner if the Commissioner finds that the revised rates are not excessive, not inadequate, and not unfairly discriminatory; and exhibit a reasonable relationship to the benefits provided by the policies. The approved rates shall be guaranteed by the insurer, as to the policyholders affected by the rates, for a period of not less than 12 months; or as an alternative to the insurer giving the guarantee, the approved rates may be applicable to all policyholders at one time if the insurer chooses to apply for that relief with respect to those policies no more frequently than once in any 12-month period. The rates shall be applicable to all policies of the same type; provided that no rate revision may become effective for any policy unless the insurer has given the policyholder written notice of the rate revision 45 days before the effective date of the revision. The policyholder must then pay the revised rate in order to continue the policy in force. The Commissioner may adopt reasonable rules, after notice and hearing, to require the submission of supporting data and such information as the Commissioner considers necessary to determine whether the rate revisions meet these standards. In adopting the rules under this subsection, the Commissioner may require identification of the types of rating methodologies used by filers and may also address issue age or attained age rating, or both; policy reserves used in rating; and other recognized actuarial principles of the NAIC, the American Academy of Actuaries, and the Society of Actuaries.

(f1) For long-term care policy forms, the maximum rate increase that may be implemented in any calendar year for any policyholder is an increase of twenty-five percent (25%) of the current policy premium rate in effect prior to the increase.

(g) For policies subject to this section, an individual health insurer shall not increase an individual's renewal premium for continued health insurance coverage under the terms of the individual's health insurance policy based on any health status-related factors in relation to the individual or a dependent of the individual, including:

- (1) Health status.
- (2) Medical condition (including physical and mental illnesses).
- (3) Claims experience.
- (4) Duration from issue.
- (5) Receipt of health care.
- (6) Medical history.
- (7) Genetic information.

(h) Every policy that is subject to this section and that provides individual accident and health insurance benefits to a resident of this State shall return to policyholders benefits that are reasonable in relation to the premium charged. The Commissioner may adopt rules or utilize existing rules to establish minimum standards for loss ratios of policies on the basis of incurred claims experience and earned premiums in accordance with accepted actuarial principles and practices to assure that the benefits are reasonable in relation to the premium charged. Every insurer providing policies in this State subject to this section shall not less than annually file for approval its rates, rating schedules, and supporting documentation to demonstrate compliance with the applicable loss ratio standards of this State as adopted by the Commissioner. All filings of rates and rating schedules shall comply with the standards adopted by the Commissioner. The filing

shall include a certification by an individual who is either a Fellow or an Associate of the Society of Actuaries or a Member of the American Academy of Actuaries that the rates are not excessive, not inadequate, and not unfairly discriminatory; and that the rates exhibit a reasonable relationship to the benefits provided by the policy. Nothing in this subsection shall require an insurer to provide certification with respect to a previous rate period, or to require an insurer to reduce properly filed and approved rates before the end of a rate period. This subsection does not apply to any long-term care policy issued in this State on or after February 1, 2003, and noncancellable accident and health insurance.

(i) For any long-term care policy issued in this State on or after February 1, 2003, an insurer shall on or before March 15 of each year:

- (1) Provide to the Commissioner an actuarial certification listing all of its long-term care policy forms available for sale in this State as of December 31 of the prior year, stating that the current premium rate schedule for each form is sufficient to cover anticipated costs under moderately adverse experience and stating that the premium rate schedule is reasonably expected to be sustainable over the life of the form with no future premium increases anticipated.
- (2) For any policy form for which the statement in subdivision (1) of this subsection cannot be made or is qualified, submit a plan of corrective action to the Commissioner for approval.

(j) For purposes of this section, accident and health insurance means insurance against death or injury resulting from accident or from accidental means and insurance against disablement, disease, or sickness of the insured. This includes Medicare supplemental insurance, long-term care, nursing home, or home health care insurance, or any combination thereof, specified disease or illness insurance, hospital indemnity or other fixed indemnity insurance, short-term limited duration health insurance, dental insurance, vision insurance, and medical, hospital, or surgical expense insurance or any combination thereof. Notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, subsection (h) of this section does not apply to disability income insurance. (1951, c. 784; 1979, c. 755, s. 15; 1989, c. 485, s. 56; 1991, c. 636, s. 3; c. 720, s. 4; 2001-334, s. 17.3; 2005-223, s. 1(b); 2005-412, ss. 1(a), 1(b); 2016-78, s. 1.2.)

§ 58-51-100. Credit accident and health insurance.

Credit accident and health insurance is declared to be insurance against death or personal injury by accident or by any specified kind or kinds of accident, and insurance against sickness, ailment, or bodily injury of a debtor who may be indebted to any person, firm, or corporation extending credit to such debtor. The amount of credit accident and health insurance written shall not exceed the installment payment. (1953, c. 1096, s. 2; 1961, c. 1071.)

§ 58-51-105. Hospitalization insurance defined.

Hospitalization insurance is declared to be any form of accident and health insurance which provides indemnity or payment for expenses incurred due to or in connection with hospitalization of the insured, or his dependents. (1953, c. 1096, s. 3.)

§ 58-51-110. Renewal, discontinuance, or replacement of group health insurance.

(a) This section applies to group accident, group health, or group accident and health policies or certificates that are delivered, issued for delivery, renewed, or used in this State which provide hospital, surgical, or major medical expense insurance, or any combination of these

coverages, on an expense incurred or service basis. It specifically includes a certificate issued under a policy that was issued to a trust located out of this State, but which includes participating employers located in this State. Renewal of these policies or certificates is presumed to occur on the anniversary date that the coverage was first effective on the employees of the employer.

(b) Whenever a contract described in subsection (a) of this section is replaced by another group contract within 15 days of termination of coverage of the previous group contract, the liability of the succeeding insurer for insuring persons covered under the previous group contract is:

- (1) Each person who is eligible for coverage in accordance with the succeeding insurer's plan of benefits, regardless of any other provisions of the new group contract relating to active employment or hospital confinement or pregnancy, shall be covered by the succeeding insurer's plan of benefits; and
- (2) Each person not covered under the succeeding insurer's plan of benefits in accordance with subdivision (b)(1) of this section must nevertheless be covered by the succeeding insurer if that person was validly covered, including benefit extension, under the prior plan on the date of discontinuance and if the person is a member of the class of persons eligible for coverage under the succeeding insurer's plan. (1989, c. 775, s. 3; 1991, c. 720, s. 88; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 837, s. 4; 2001-334, s. 6.)

§ 58-51-115. Coordination of benefits with Medicaid.

(a) As used in this section and in G.S. 58-51-120 and G.S. 58-51-125:

- (1) "Health benefit plan" means any accident and health insurance policy or certificate; a nonprofit hospital or medical service corporation contract; a health maintenance organization subscriber contract; a plan provided by a multiple employer welfare arrangement; the State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees and any optional plans or programs operating under Part 2 of Article 3 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes; or a plan provided by another benefit arrangement. "Health benefit plan" does not mean a Medicare supplement policy as defined in G.S. 58-54-1(5).
- (2) "Health insurer" means any health insurance company subject to Articles 1 through 63 of this Chapter, including a multiple employee welfare arrangement, and any corporation subject to Articles 65 and 67 of this Chapter; a group health plan, as defined in section 607(1) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974; and the State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees and any optional plans or programs operating under Part 2 of Article 3 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes.

(b) No health insurer shall take into account that an individual is eligible for or is provided medical assistance in this or any other state under 42 U.S.C. § 1396a (section 1902 of the Social Security Act) in insuring that individual or making payments under its health benefit plan for benefits to that individual or on that individual's behalf. (1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 644, s. 1; 1995, c. 193, s. 43; 1999-293, s. 9; 2007-298, s. 8.6; 2007-323, s. 28.22A(o); 2007-345, s. 12.)

§ 58-51-116. ERISA plans may not require Medicaid to pay first.

An employee benefit plan as defined in ERISA shall not include any provision which, because an individual is provided or is eligible for benefits or service pursuant to a State plan under Title

XIX of the Social Security Act (Medicaid), has the effect of limiting or excluding coverage or payment for any health care for that individual under the terms of the employee benefit plan, provided that the individual is one who would otherwise be covered or entitled to benefits or services under the employee benefit plan. (1993, c. 321, s. 238.1; 2001-446, s. 4.3.)

§ 58-51-120. Coverage of children.

(a) No health insurer shall deny enrollment of a child under the health benefit plan of the child's parent on any of the following grounds:

- (1) The child was born out of wedlock.
- (2) The child is not claimed as a dependent on the parent's federal income tax return.
- (3) The child does not reside with the parent or in the insurer's service area.

(b) If a parent is required by a court or administrative order to provide health benefit plan coverage for a child, and the parent is eligible for family health benefit plan coverage through a health insurer, the health insurer:

- (1) Must allow the parent to enroll, under the family coverage, a child who is otherwise eligible for the coverage without regard to any enrollment season restrictions.
- (2) Must enroll the child under family coverage upon application of the child's other parent or the Department of Health and Human Services in connection with its administration of the Medical Assistance or Child Support Enforcement Program if the parent is enrolled but fails to make application to obtain coverage for the child.
- (3) May not disenroll or eliminate coverage of the child unless the health insurer is provided satisfactory written evidence that:
 - a. The court or administrative order is no longer in effect; or
 - b. The child is or will be enrolled in comparable health benefit plan coverage through another health insurer, which coverage will take effect not later than the effective date of disenrollment.

(c) If a child has health benefit plan coverage through the health insurer of a noncustodial parent, that health insurer shall do all of the following:

- (1) Provide such information to the custodial parent as may be necessary for the child to obtain benefits through that coverage.
- (2) Permit the custodial parent (or the health care provider, with the custodial parent's approval) to submit claims for covered services without the approval of the noncustodial parent.
- (3) Make payments on claims submitted in accordance with subdivision (2) of this subsection directly to the custodial parent, the provider, or the Department of Health and Human Services.

(d) No health insurer may impose requirements on any State agency that has been assigned the rights of an individual eligible for medical assistance under Medicaid and covered for health benefits from the insurer that are different from requirements applicable to an agent or assignee of any other individual so covered. (1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 644, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a).)

§ 58-51-125. Adopted child coverage.

(a) Definitions. – As used in this section:

- (1) "Child" means, in connection with any adoption or placement for adoption of the child, an individual who has not attained 18 years of age as of the date of the adoption or placement for adoption.
- (2) "Placement for adoption" means the assumption and retention by a person of a legal obligation for total or partial support of a child in anticipation of the adoption of the child. The child's placement with a person terminates upon the termination of such legal obligations.

(b) Coverage Effective Upon Placement for Adoption. – If a health benefit plan provides coverage for dependent children of persons covered by the plan, the plan shall provide benefits to dependent children placed with covered persons for adoption under the same terms and conditions that apply to the natural, dependent children of covered persons, irrespective of whether the adoption has become final.

(c) Restrictions Based on Preexisting Conditions at Time of Placement for Adoption Prohibited. – A health benefit plan may not restrict coverage under the plan of any dependent child adopted by a covered person, or placed with a covered person for adoption, solely on the basis of any preexisting condition of the child at the time that the child would otherwise become eligible for coverage under the plan, if the adoption or placement for adoption occurs while the covered person is eligible for coverage under the plan. (1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 644, s. 1.)

§ 58-51-130. Standards for disability income insurance policies.

(a) Definitions. – As used in this section:

- (1) "Disability income insurance policy" or "policy" means a policy of accident and health insurance that provides payments when the insured is unable to work because of illness, disease, or injury.
- (2) "Policy" includes the certificates referred to in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Applicability. – This section applies to all policies used in this State, including certificates issued under group policies that are used in this State. This section also applies to a certificate issued under a policy issued and delivered to a trust or to an association outside of this State and covering persons residing in this State.

(c) Disclosure Standards. – Every disability income insurance policy shall include provisions, where applicable, addressing:

- (1) Terms of renewability.
- (2) Initial and subsequent conditions of eligibility.
- (3) Nonduplication of coverage.
- (4) Preexisting conditions.
- (5) Probationary periods.
- (6) Elimination periods.
- (7) Requirements for replacement.
- (8) Recurrent conditions.
- (9) Definitions of terms.

(d) Preexisting Conditions. – If an insurer does not seek a prospective insured's medical history in the application or enrollment process, the insurer shall not deny a claim for disabilities that commence more than 24 months after the effective date of the insured person's coverage on the grounds the disability is caused by a preexisting condition. A policy shall not define a preexisting condition more restrictively than "a condition for which medical advice, diagnosis, care, or

treatment was received or recommended within the 24-month period immediately preceding the effective date of coverage of the insured person."

(e) Exceptions. – Nothing in this section prohibits an insurer from:

- (1) Using an application or enrollment form designed to elicit the medical history of a prospective insured.
- (2) Underwriting based on answers on the form according to the insurer's established standards.
- (3) Contesting the answers in accordance with G.S. 58-51-15(a)(2)a.

(f) Required Provisions. – Each policy shall include:

- (1) A description of the principal benefits and coverage provided in the policy.
- (2) A statement of the exceptions, reductions, and limitations contained in the policy.
- (3) A statement of the renewal provisions, including any reservation by the insurer of a right to change premiums.

(g) Other Applicable Provisions. – G.S. 58-51-95(f) applies to individual policies and G.S. 58-51-80(g) applies to group policies.

(h) Other Income Sources. – If a policy contains a provision that provides for integration of benefits with other income sources, it shall include a definition of what is considered other income sources and a complete description of how benefits will be reduced by other income sources, if at all. No disability income policy shall provide that the amount of any disability benefit paid to the insured shall be reduced by reason of any cost-of-living increase, designated as such under the federal Social Security Act, if the cost-of-living increase occurs during the period for which benefits are payable. (1999-351, s. 2.)