

Bill would give self-paying nursing home patients more rights

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SACRAMENTO - Nursing home patients who aren't covered by government health care programs would get more rights under legislation sent to the governor on Monday.

The bill by Sen. Elaine Alquist, D-Santa Clara, **would require that all patients be covered by federal regulations that now apply only to patients in the Medicare or Medi-Cal programs.**

Those regulations provide patients with greater rights than current California law in several areas, including choice of physicians, family visiting times, transfers and discharges.

It was approved by the Assembly on a 45-26 vote despite opposition from Assemblyman Ray Haynes, R-Murrieta, who suggested the bill wasn't needed because it would benefit patients who pay out of their own pocket.

"If you're paying for your own services and don't like the services you're getting, you can leave and find somebody who will give you the services that you want," he said. "We don't need a bunch of government bureaucrats running around telling people what homes they should go to."

But Assemblywoman Lori Saldana, D-San Diego, said older patients often aren't able to move from nursing home to nursing home.

"We're dealing with seniors who cannot simply pack up and move if they're not satisfied with their facilities," she said. "They're not people who have the option of moving at a moment's whim. We're simply asking that basic care be provided."

The measure passed the Senate in May on a vote of 27-11.

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Read the bill, SB1248 at <http://www.senate.ca.gov/>