

information and making comparisons. The public will then be able to have a cost comparison between hospitals. Now, admittedly we are talking January 1, 1987. That is almost two years away. But it takes that much time for these insurance companies to switch over to the new billing form, and to start to change their computers, and for the hospitals to make the adjustments, and everybody to get ready for the change. It's major. But it's a lot easier now than it was two years ago, for instance, because the federal government has gone to what is called the UB82 form. This form is used by the federal government to bill for Medicare patients by the hospitals. So that is a major chunk of hospitals charges, and they are all using that form now. So the next step is to get the private insurers and the private third party insurers, and all the different people that are insured outside of the federal government Medicare system to start using that same form. So the private sector now has to follow the public sector in utilizing the same form. When we get to that level, we can start to make comparisons and inform the public better about charges. In the meantime we have in the bill and the amendments that are before you provisions for the hospitals to start making public the charges they make for the 20 most frequently utilized health care services that they provide, surgeries, what have you. This provides to the public, when they go to a hospital, to find out what the charge would be for that surgery that is most frequently performed at that hospital. This way they would have an advance idea of what the charges are. All the hospitals would be required to provide this information. It doesn't really have that much of a burden for them because they already know what their most frequent utilization is in terms of surgeries, and they know the charges they make. So what they are doing is making this public, and the public finally has access to that information. Secondly, what we provide in the bill is that you get a cost estimate. If you have a diagnosis that you are going to need a certain type of surgery, and it is not an emergency, it is whatever surgery you might be thinking about, you could ask for, at the different hospitals you would be considering, an estimate on what the cost would be. They would then be required to provide that estimate to you, and you could compare the costs between the hospitals and make a choice. Presently, you may be able to request that information, but you may not always be able to get it. So this would require the hospitals to provide that information and to cooperate in providing it. So the