



Bill would require insurers to pay for anti-smoking help

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A bill introduced in the state Legislature today would require private health insurers to pay for stop-smoking drugs and counseling.

Under House bill 5766, insurers would be on the hook for at least \$500 of annual coverage for people ages 15 years old and older. They'd be responsible for covering an array of stop-smoking approaches: counseling and support groups, over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapies, and prescription drugs.

"Approximately 70 percent of smokers say they want to quit," said Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-[Chicago](#), cosponsor of the bill with Senator Heather Steans, D-[Chicago](#). "We need to give them the tools they need to succeed."

Seven other states have a similar law on the books already, said Joel Africk, president and CEO of the Respiratory Health Association of [Chicago](#). The association helped draft the bill, he said, modeling it on Oregon's law. He pointed out the long-term financial savings made possible by people quitting smoking.

"This bill is something that will pay off for employers, taxpayers and government alike," he said.

--Dan Simmons