
**Health Care & Wellness
Committee**

HB 1460

Brief Description: Extending existing mental health parity requirements to individual and small group plans.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Hankins, Cody, Campbell, Morrell, Green, Dickerson, Darneille, McDermott, Jarrett, Hudgins, Moeller, Kagi, Rodne, Williams, Ormsby, Haigh, Linville, Wood, Conway, O'Brien, Hasegawa, Santos and Lantz.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires mental health parity in health plans offered in the individual and small group insurance markets.

Hearing Date: 2/12/07

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

Currently, commercial insurance policies covering more than 50 employees, state employees and the Basic Health Plan are required to cover mental health services in a manner equal to coverage for other medical and surgical services. This mental health parity requirement first became effective January 1, 2006, with additional phased-in requirements for maximum out-of-pocket limits, and a single deductible in 2008 and 2010, respectively.

Currently 48 states require some form of mental health parity for insurance coverage of mental health services, or have mental health mandates of some sort. Twenty states, including Washington, provide exemptions for some small groups, from mental health parity requirements. In Washington small group policies are exempt from the required coverage, however insurance carriers are required to offer each small group optional supplemental coverage for mental health treatment.

Summary of Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Effective January 1, 2008, insurance policies issued for all individuals, groups and the Washington State Health Insurance Pool (WSHIP) are required to include coverage for mental health services equal to coverage for other medical and surgical services. The requirement for insurance carriers to offer supplemental coverage to small groups is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2008.