
Education Committee

2ESSB 5100

Brief Description: Regarding health insurance information for students.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, McAuliffe, Regala, Fairley, Shin, Weinstein, Murray, Keiser, Prentice, Kline, Spanel, Fraser, Tom, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen).

Brief Summary of Second Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Creates a pilot project where up to six school districts annually inquire whether students have health insurance; seek parental authorization to share information; develop information-sharing agreements with a local health outreach organization; and authorize the outreach organization to contact families and assist them in enrolling students in a medical program.
- Requires data collection and reporting on the number of students without insurance and the development of information-sharing agreements.

Hearing Date: 2/26/08

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

As part of a children's health bill enacted in 2007, the Legislature directed the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to undertake an outreach and education effort to enroll children in health coverage, including the expanded coverage authorized by the bill. The DSHS must collaborate with other health agencies and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in the outreach effort, as well as contract with community-based organizations and government entities such as local health departments to help families apply for and access health coverage.

In Whatcom County, the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access (Alliance) is a community non-profit organization that has developed working partnerships with local school districts to

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share information about students' health coverage and provide information to families about health insurance eligibility, options, and costs. The Alliance also conducts outreach regarding health coverage through the schools using a variety of communication vehicles. The Alliance and the school districts have developed information-sharing agreements to ensure that state and federal laws protecting student and patient privacy are maintained.

Summary of Bill:

By July 1, 2008, the OSPI must select up to six school districts from urban and rural areas and including Eastern and Western Washington, to implement the following pilot project:

1. Beginning in 2008-09, as part of its enrollment process, each participating school annually inquires whether a student has health insurance and includes a statement explaining that an outreach worker may contact families with uninsured students about options for health care coverage. Provisions must be made for the parent or guardian to authorize sharing of information for this purpose.
2. Each student's health insurance status is recorded in the district's student information system.
3. By December 1, 2008, the school develops a list of students without insurance for whom parent authorization to share this information has been granted. The list includes student identifying information and contact information for the parent or guardian.
4. By January 1, 2009, each participating school and a local outreach organization, where available, works to put in place an agreement to share student information in accordance with confidentiality requirements. Once the agreement is in place, the school shares the list of students with the outreach organization. An outreach organization is a nonprofit organization or a local government entity either contracting with the DSHS to provide outreach regarding access to health coverage or otherwise qualified to provide education and enrollment services to uninsured children.
5. The outreach organization contacts families and assists them to enroll students on a medical program.

By September 1, 2008, the OSPI and the DSHS must develop and make available a model agreement to enable schools in the pilot project to share student information in compliance with state and federal confidentiality requirements.

Beginning July 1, 2009, the participating schools must report annually to the OSPI on the number of students identified without health insurance and whether an agreement is in place with an outreach organization. Beginning December 1, 2009, the DSHS and the OSPI must annually submit a joint report to the Legislature that provides summary information on the number of students identified without health insurance, the number of agreements with outreach organizations, the impact of outreach efforts, and any recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.