

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1109

As Reported By House Committee On:
Corrections

Title: An act relating to health care services for offenders.

Brief Description: Requiring offenders to assist in paying for certain health care services.

Sponsors: Representatives Ballasiotes, Quall, Morris, Cole, Mastin, Blanton, Koster, Tokuda, Kremen, Honeyford, Schoesler, Brumsickle, Casada, Mulliken, Stevens, Johnson, Huff, Smith, Silver, Foreman, Campbell, Hymes, Costa, Kessler, Sherstad, Carlson, Backlund, Benton, Mielke and Elliot; by request of Department of Corrections.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Corrections: 1/27/95, 1/31/95 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Ballasiotes, Chair; Blanton, Vice Chair; Sherstad, Vice Chair; Quall, Ranking Minority Member; Tokuda, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cole; Dickerson; Koster; Radcliff and Schoesler.

Staff: Antonio Sanchez (786-7383).

Background:

Department of Corrections Health Care

One of the most significantly rising costs in our prison system is inmate health care. Since 1986, the health care expenditures for inmates in prison have almost tripled. They have gone from \$10.97 million in 1986 to \$33.3 million in 1994. This represents an increase of 86 percent in the average annual expenditure per offender for health care. These costs are expected to continue to rise as medical costs inflate, the prison population grows, and an increasing number of inmates become older and need additional health and long-term care.

Currently the Department of Corrections' policy is to "provide, at a minimum, a degree of care which is designed to reasonably respond to an inmate's serious medical and dental needs." Class action litigation has helped shape this policy and the health care services that the state is required to provide under it. The department is required to pay for all the health care needs of inmates attended to under this policy. Health care provided by the Department of Corrections can be grouped into four broad types of care as follows:

- Medical care to meet inmates' serious medical needs
- Basic dental care
- Mental health treatment and counseling
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Medical co-payments have been found to reduce health care expenditures by discouraging overutilization and inappropriate use of health care services and are an important part of health care reform.

Currently, inmates who receive health care in state prison are not required to pay in part or in full for their health care. They are also not required to pay co-payments for each medical visit.

Summary of Substitute Bill: All inmates are required to pay a co-payment of no less than \$3 each time they receive health care they have initiated. Co-payments are not required for emergency treatments, visits initiated by health care staff, or for treatment of serious health care conditions. Inmates can pay by having the co-payment deducted from their personal accounts.

No medical services can be withheld from an inmate due to lack of funds.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The department's discretion to define the amount of the co-payment was eliminated and replaced with a co-payment of no less than \$3.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This will lower the costs of providing health care in prisons. Inmates will learn to participate more effectively in their health care and learn consumer responsibility.

Testimony Against: This will have a chilling effect on many legitimate uses of health services in prison.

Testified: Martha Hardin, Superior Court Judges' Association (pro); Dave Savage, Department of Corrections (pro); Beth Anderson, Department of Corrections (pro); Gene St. John, Washington Public Employees Association (pro); and Sherry Appleton, Washington Defense Association/Washington Criminal Defense League (con).