

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6123

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, January 23, 1996

Title: An act relating to basic health plan services for agencies licensed under chapter 74.15 RCW.

Brief Description: Providing basic health plan services for agencies licensed under chapter 74.15 RCW.

Sponsors: Senators Quigley, Fairley, McAuliffe, Kohl, Sheldon, Franklin, Drew, Loveland, Smith, Thibaudeau, Snyder, Spanel, Rinehart, Bauer, Haugen and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 12/1/95; 1/12/96, 1/23/96 [DPS-WM, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6123 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Quigley, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; Fairley, Franklin, Thibaudeau and Winsley.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Deccio and Moyer.

Staff: Don Sloma (786-7319)

Background: The state licenses or contracts with a wide variety of individuals, family run businesses and private, nonprofit community, church and professional organizations to serve thousands of children who are legally dependent upon the state for their care and nurturing. These service providers are family foster parents, group foster care facilities, crisis residential centers for runaway children and similar facilities.

In addition, the state regulates or contracts with thousands of family day care providers and child care centers who provide day care services.

In both cases, there is concern that state vendor rates, and in the case of child care, private market rates may not be sufficient to allow these care givers to purchase health insurance for themselves or for their employees. Estimates are that among child care providers, about one third have no health insurance offered through their employer. Further it is estimated that 40 percent to 50 percent of the workers in all of these facilities live in families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Health Care Authority Administrator is authorized to enroll licensed individuals and employees of care and foster care agencies, nursing homes, adult family homes, supported living situations and boarding homes, their spouses and dependent children in the Basic Health Plan. Subject to funds specifically appropriated for the purpose, the administrator must offset employees' premium contribution for employees whose family income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

An unspecified appropriation is made from the health services account to the basic health plan account to provide subsidies for an unspecified number of agencies named in the bill. Employees enrolled in BHP under this bill must be treated as individual BHP enrollees.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Employees of nursing homes, adult family homes, boarding homes and supported living are added to the group eligible for further subsidies.

Clarification is provided that all enrollees under the bill are to be treated as individual BHP enrollees.

Appropriation: Unspecified.

Fiscal Note: Requested on December 28, 1995.

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

Testimony For: This bill will expand access to employees of agencies that care for children and the elderly at low wages. It sets a good example for the state to extend this subsidy who do this work largely under contract with the state.

Testimony Against: The goal of the legislation is laudable, but the state does not have the money. The health services account is already over-extended if all enrollment targets are met.

Testified: Don Knapp, Foster Parents Assoc. of WA State (pro); Pam Jones, Michelle Dower, Olympia Assoc. for Education of Young Children (pro); Margaret Casey, WSCC (pro); Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society (pro).