

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2592

Brief Description: Funding family planning.

Background: Current federal Medicaid (Title XIX) rules prohibit the use of federal funds for the provision of family planning services. States must seek a waiver from these rules in order to receive federal matching funds if these services are provided to the Medicaid eligible population.

Washington offers these services through the First Steps program to families with incomes up to 185 percent of poverty for 12 months. However, one must be pregnant to access First Steps, so this program is available only after the birth of a baby or termination of the pregnancy.

Washington submitted a waiver request to the federal government in 1994 similar to that being proposed in HB 2592. The request was withdrawn because it seemed likely that the waiver would be denied. This waiver was submitted without direction from the Legislature or Governor.

Since then, at least 13 other states have applied for this Medicaid waiver. Among the states with approved waivers are New Mexico and South Carolina. Oregon has just submitted a request to go to 185 percent of Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Last year, California passed a bill providing the same service on a state-funded basis.

The only other avenue for lower income families who are not poor enough to be on public assistance to get access to family planning is through the Department of Health (DOH) Title X and state-funded family planning clinics which are able to serve roughly one-half of the women who need subsidized services on a non-entitlement basis subject to available funds. The DOH services are available for free to those at or under 100 percent of FPL and on a subsidized basis to those from 100 - 200 percent FPL.

Summary: The bill directs the Governor to negotiate a waiver of Title XIX rules with the federal government. This waiver would permit the provision of family planning services to families with income less than 200 percent of FPL.

It is estimated by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) that approximately 10,000 uninsured women would be eligible for family planning services provided up to 200

percent of FPL. The estimated annual cost to provide these services is \$400 per family. These costs could be offset by fewer of these women enrolling in Medicaid as a result of becoming pregnant.

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

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 1998.