

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8408

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 5, 2001

Brief Description: Establishing a blue ribbon commission on medical care cost and access.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Parlette, Thibaudeau, Fairley, B. Sheldon, Fraser, Prentice, Gardner, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/28/01, 3/5/01 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 8408 be substituted therefor, and the substitute concurrent resolution do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Costa, Deccio, Fraser, Parlette and Winsley.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: There is concern that the cost of medical care is once again increasing at a disproportionately high rate, and that this increase is placing quality care beyond the reach of a growing number of Washington residents and straining the resources of public and private entities. Efforts to control medical expenditures are affecting the stability of the health care work force and the financial viability of medical facilities, threatening to reduce access to care even further.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Cost and Access is established. The commission consists of 11 members, including eight legislators, the Insurance Commissioner, and two members appointed by the Governor, one of whom is the chair. The commission must establish ad hoc technical advisory committees as appropriate.

The commission must conduct a comprehensive assessment of the health care financing and delivery system in this state, evaluate alternatives to address the problems identified in the assessment, and recommend specific actions to be taken by state agencies, the Legislature, and others to implement the preferred alternatives.

The commission must submit an initial report to the Legislature and the Governor by December 1, 2001, submit recommendations by December 1, 2002, and submit a final report by December 1, 2003. It ceases to exist on December 1, 2003.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute replaces references to "medical" and "medical care" with reference to "health" and "health care."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: The bill is the result of concerns expressed by constituents. It uses the model that proved useful with regard to transportation issues. There are no simple answers to current problems in health care. The commission would allow for an in-depth and comprehensive examination of the current system and potential solutions. It would be a place for those with concerns about the direction of the current system to provide input.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Bill Hagens, Office of the Insurance Commissioner; Andrea Stephenson, Empower Alliance; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, WFT.