

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5583-S

May 15, 2001

To the Honorable President and Members,
The Senate of the State of Washington
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 8, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5583 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to the implementation of recommendations of the joint legislative audit and review committee's performance audit of the public mental health system;"

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5583 expresses the legislature's support for most of the recommendations of a recent performance audit of the community mental health system by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC). I too support those recommendations, relating to funding flexibility, performance measurement, performance incentives, and other improvements. I also support the bill's goal of minimizing the percentage of available funding that is spent on administrative activities at all levels of the mental health system.

However, section 8 of the bill would have required the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to develop a plan to reduce administrative expenses in the system, including the Regional Support Networks and community-based treatment providers, to ten percent of available funds, and submit the plan to the legislature by December 15, 2001, with an assumed implementation date of July 1, 2003.

Minimizing administrative costs is an important goal for any program. But the Secretary of DSHS advises me that developing a realistic plan to achieve that goal for the mental health system as a whole will take longer than seven months, in part because it requires the active participation of mental health providers and Regional Support Networks.

The legislature's intent to see a plan implemented in July 2003 allows enough time to develop such a plan properly. Therefore, I have vetoed section 8 and direct DSHS to work with appropriate stakeholders to complete the plan, and make recommendations to me and to the legislature by October 1, 2002. For these reasons, I have vetoed section 8 of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5583.

With the exception of section 8, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5583 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor