
**Health Care & Wellness
Committee**

HB 2536

Brief Description: Establishing a citizens' work group on health care.

Sponsors: Representatives Cody, VanDeWege, Hasegawa, Ormsby, Seaquist, Morrell, Schual-Berke, Upthegrove and Green.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a nine member citizens work group on health care.

Hearing Date: 1/17/08

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

Over the past 20 years, Washington state has enacted several policy and budget initiatives to extend health coverage to individuals and families who did not have access to affordable health insurance. The creation of the Basic Health Plan, the expansion of eligibility for the Medicaid program, the creation of the "cover all children" program, and the Health Insurance Partnership all combine to extend publically subsidized health coverage to previously uninsured groups. There is still a sizeable population of individuals in Washington who are not covered by health insurance and do not have access to affordable health coverage. There is not a consensus about how best to provide access to affordable, quality health coverage to all Washingtonians. Options to provide increased access to affordable health coverage range from private sector modifications of insurance regulation to public sector expansions of existing publically subsidized programs.

Summary of Bill:

The Governor is required to appoint a nine member work group by April 1, 2008 to examine options for improving access to quality, affordable health care. The work group may represent business, labor, health care providers and consumers, and people with a background in health care financing and health care ethics. The work group is required to conduct meetings across the state,

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develop a multi-prong communication strategy, and develop methods to provide information to state residents and seek public input.

The work group will contract for an independent economic analysis of four separate health care proposals to provide affordable health coverage:

- allowing health carriers to offer a health plan with a limited scope of benefits;
- expanding the Health Insurance Partnership to include individuals and large employer groups;
- providing a guaranteed benefit plan for all Washingtonians; and
- covering all Washingtonians, except individuals who are covered by a federal program, are incarcerated, or are new to the state, and that is funded through a payroll assessment applied to employers and employees.

The work group is required to report its findings and recommendations to appropriate committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives by December 1, 2008.

The Office of Financial Management is required to provide staff support and administrative services to the work group. If requested, state agencies, the Senate, and the House of Representatives are required to provide staff support to the work group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.