

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2501

As Passed House:

February 9, 2006

Title: An act relating to clarifying that coverage for mental health services as defined in RCW 48.21.241, 48.44.341, and 48.46.291 applies to all group health plans for groups other than small groups as defined in RCW 48.43.005.

Brief Description: Regulating group health benefit plan coverage of mental health services.

Sponsors: By Representatives Schual-Berke, Cody and Morrell; by request of Insurance Commissioner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 1/20/06, 1/24/06 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/9/06, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- All group benefit plans offered by health carriers for groups other than small groups defined in RCW 48.43.005 must phase in mental health parity in 2006, 2008, and 2010.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Campbell, Vice Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Appleton, Bailey, Clibborn, Condotta, Green, Lantz, Moeller, Schual-Berke and Skinner.

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

All benefit plans offered by health carriers for groups of 50 or more employees must phase in mental health parity in 2006, 2008, and 2010.

Summary of Bill:

All group benefit plans offered by health carriers for groups other than small groups defined in RCW 48.43.005 must phase in mental health parity in 2006, 2008, and 2010.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: This bill provides a specific definition of who is required to comply with statutory requirements and who is exempt. Groups that meet the statutory definition of a small employer are not required to comply with the requirement of mental health parity.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Beth Berendt, Office of the Insurance Commissioner; and Randy Revelle, Washington Coalition for Insurance Parity.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.