

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 3079

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 23, 2006
Ways & Means, February 27, 2006

Title: An act relating to health care services.

Brief Description: Reporting on the employment status of recipients of medicaid and the basic health plan.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Conway, Cody, Sells, Dickerson, Morrell, Simpson, Schual-Berke, Hasegawa, Chase and Santos).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/14/06, 94-3.

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/20/06, 2/23/06 [DPA-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/27/06 [DPA(HEA)].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Thibaudeau, Vice Chair; Deccio, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Franklin, Kastama, Kline, Parlette and Poulsen.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller and Schoesler.

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: The Basic Health Plan (BHP) is a state sponsored program administered by the Health Care Authority (HCA) to provide subsidized health insurance coverage to low income Washington residents who are not eligible for Medicare or institutionalized at the time of enrollment. Medical assistance is also available to state residents from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), primarily through the Medicaid program.

In 2005, legislation passed requiring both the HCA and DSHS, in coordination with the Employment Security Department, to report annually to the Legislature on the employment status of BHP enrollees and medical assistance recipients. The Governor vetoed the bill, citing the failure of the Legislature to appropriate funding for its implementation, and significant privacy and public disclosure concerns regarding the release of employer-specific

information. However, she also directed the agencies to develop such a report and distribute the information in accordance with state and federal confidentiality laws.

Summary of Amended Bill: The HCA and DSHS are to report annually to the Legislature on the number of BHP enrollees and medical assistance recipients who upon enrollment or recertification reported being employed, or reported being the dependent of someone who was employed, and the total cost to the state for these enrollees. The information is to be reported by employer for employees having more than fifty employees as enrollees or recipients, or with dependents as enrollees or recipients. Certain aggregated information is regarding these enrollees or recipients is also to be provided.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The striking amendment removes several types of information from the agency reporting requirement. It also adds the requirement that reported information identify those enrollees or recipients who are dependents of someone who was employed. More detail is provided regarding the aggregated information to be reported, and reporting periods are specified. The amendment also removes the requirement that the report include recommendations for strategies to reduce state costs associated with providing assistance to individuals who are employed on a full-time and year-around basis.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For (Health & Long-Term Care): This bill is intended to fix the bill that the Governor vetoed last year. The fix is intended to address the issue surrounding the confidentiality of data from the Employment Security Department. The purpose of this bill is to make the collected information more broadly disclosable. For fiscal reasons, we support a striking amendment modeled after the Senate version of the bill, assuming it gets the essential information. A debate on the issue will require that good information be available. Be careful not to let fiscal concerns limit too much the information made available in this report. It will be valuable to know why these employees are enrolled in state programs.

Testimony Against (Health & Long-Term Care): None.

Testimony Other (Health & Long-Term Care): If the bill is changed to cover only those employers with fifty or more enrollees, and retains at least something that looks at why people are not signing up for employer plans, this is a bill we could be comfortable with.

Who Testified (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Representative Conway, Prime Sponsor; Robbie Stern, Washington State labor Council; Steve Gano, Wal Mart. OTHER: Carolyn Logue, National Federation of Independent Business.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): This would be a good expenditure because it would provide good information for future decision-making. WalMart hopes that the information will confirm the extent to which it is helping people leave the state's welfare rolls.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Who Testified (Ways & Means): PRO: Robbie Stern, Washington State Labor Council;
Steve Gano, WalMart Corporation.