

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5558

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Health Care

**Title:** An act relating to the prescription drug assistance foundation.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a prescription drug assistance foundation.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, Swecker, Fraser, Keiser, Benson, Brandland, Weinstein, Roach, Rasmussen, McAuliffe, Pridemore, Shin, Rockefeller and Kohl-Welles).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Health Care: 3/18/05, 3/22/05 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill  
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Creates a nonprofit organization to assist low income citizens to access free or low-cost prescription drugs.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Campbell, Vice Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Bailey, Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Appleton, Clibborn, Condotta, Green, Lantz, Moeller, Schual-Berke and Skinner.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Hinkle.

**Staff:** Dave Knutson (786-7146).

**Background:**

In recent years, individuals have become much more reliant on prescription drugs to improve and maintain their health. At the same time, retail drug prices have increased substantially, leaving many unable to afford their prescribed medications.

In an effort to address this, pharmaceutical manufacturers have developed prescription drug assistance programs that provide free or low cost drugs to those otherwise unable to afford them. Many companies have prescription drug assistance programs with various application processes and eligibility criteria. A person is often required to apply multiple times over the

course of a year, and must wait while his or her application is processed before returning to his or her physician to get the drugs. There is concern that these factors present significant barriers to the use of these programs by those who need them.

In some states, non-profit organizations have been created to streamline and reduce variations in the application and distribution process of these assistance programs, giving those in need easier access to the free drugs supplied by manufacturers.

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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

The Health Care Authority must establish a nonprofit foundation to assist uninsured individuals with an income below 300 percent of the federal poverty level in obtaining free or low cost prescription drugs. The foundation's five-member board of directors will be appointed by the Governor.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

No general fund state funds may be used to support the on-going operation of the foundation.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** The foundation will provide an opportunity for the pharmaceutical industry to help people who are having difficulty affording prescription drugs.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** Allen Morrow, Senior Citizen's Lobby; Dr. Bob Crittenden, University of Washington, Washington Association of Family Physicians, and Communities Connect; Holly Detzler, Communities Connect; Kyle Downey, Spokane Project Access; Dr. Charlotte Clark-Neitzel, SeaMar Community Health Center; and Cliff Webster, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.