

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6469

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 1, 2006

Title: An act relating to the creation of the blue ribbon commission on health care cost and access.

Brief Description: Creating a blue ribbon commission on health care cost and access.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Keiser, Haugen, Franklin, Brown, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Spanel, Kline and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/23/06, 2/1/06 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/7/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6469 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benson, Johnson and Parlette.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Brandland.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: There is concern that attempts in this state to reduce the number of uninsured, or otherwise increase access to health care, are falling short. Increasing costs threaten to put quality care beyond the reach of a growing number of state residents, and are straining the resources of business and public program. Some suggest that implementation of a more formal, sustained, and coordinated effort at the state level will be required if this issue is to be addressed.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Cost and Access is created to provide a forum for the development and implementation of long-term strategies to assure access to secure, appropriate, and affordable care for all Washington residents.

The fourteen-member Commission will include two members from each legislative caucus; the Governor, or her designee; the Insurance Commissioner, or his designee; the Assistant Secretary for Health and Recovery Services in the Department of Social and Health Services; the medical director of the worker's compensation program in the Department of Labor and Industries; the Secretary of the Department of Health; and the Administrator of the Health Care Authority. It will establish technical advisory committees including those with an interest or expertise relevant to its work.

By December 1, 2006, the Commission is to develop a sustainable five-year plan to substantially improve access to affordable health care in this state. The plan is to be based on explicit, measurable goals, identify specific strategies to meet those goals, and assign responsibility and estimate any costs for implementing those strategies.

The bill will be null and void unless specifically funded in the budget.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill adds the medical director of the worker's compensation program at the Department of Labor and Industries to the Commission. It also adds the Washington Health Foundation and the Washington Healthcare Forum as groups to be represented on the technical advisory committees, and changes an existing reference from "medical treatment providers" to "health care providers".

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Testimony For (Health & Long-Term Care): Washington State must begin planning to reach the goal of secure health care access for all of our residents. Every year it seems our health care system, or more accurately non-system, grows worse. The number of uninsured is increasing, and the financial viability of private medical practices is in jeopardy. The cost of health insurance makes things particularly difficult for small business. Other states are taking action to address these issues, and Washington should as well. This bill will start the debate on what can be done in a serious and thoughtful way.

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

Who Testified (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Senator Thibaudeau, prime sponsor; Shawn Cantrell, Kent Davis, Christian Fromuth, Megan Priefer, Washington Citizen Action; Dr. Sarah Weinberg, Paul Pruit, Health Care for All Washington; Charles Heaney, King County Medical Society; Robby Stern, Washington State Labor Council; Kathleen Collins, Dr. Chris Covert Bowles, Washington Academy of Family Physicians; Ruth Shearer, The Senior Lobby.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: Dr. Peter Dunbar, Washington State Medical Association.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): Health care costs are a major concern and must be addressed in a comprehensive and thoughtful way. The state now spends one of every three

dollars in its budget on health care. Health care costs and access have to be addressed together – one can't be done without the other.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Who Testified (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Thibaudeau (prime sponsor); Bill Daley, Washington Citizen Action.