
**Health Care & Wellness
Committee**

SSB 6583

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to eligibility for medical assistance.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Brandland and Hargrove).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Expands eligibility for individuals who are categorically needy under the Medicaid program, if funding is provided in the 2009-11 biennial budget.

Hearing Date: 2/21/08

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

In the State of Washington, an individual may qualify for Medicaid coverage under the "categorically needy" (CN) program if the individual is disabled, blind, or over age 65, and meets income limitations. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has set the income limitation for the CN program at \$637 per month for one person, or \$956 per month for two persons. A person who is disabled, blind, or over age 65, and who has an income greater than \$637 per month may qualify for Medicaid under the "medically needy" (MN) program only if the person can prove that the person has spent all of his or her excess income above \$637 per month on medical expenses for the three- or six-month period prior to coverage. A person who is released from a correctional institution or institution for mental diseases is not eligible to qualify for Medicaid under the MN program if the person's medical expenses for the previous three- or six-month period were covered by the institution. DSHS may change the income limitation for the CN Medicaid program within parameters authorized by the federal government without losing federal matching funds.

The federal poverty level refers to poverty guidelines published annually by the federal Department of Health and Human Services. These guidelines are adjusted annually to account for

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inflation. The federal poverty level is currently \$851 per month for one individual or \$1,141 per month for two persons.

Summary of Bill:

DSSH must raise the categorically needy income level (CNIL) for aged, blind, and disabled persons to 80 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) as adjusted annually beginning July 1, 2009, 90 percent beginning July 1, 2011, and 100 percent beginning July 1, 2013. The act takes effect July 1, 2009, and the provisions of the bill are contingent upon funding provided in the 2009-11 biennial budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on SB 6583 and requested for SSB 6583 on February 19, 2008.

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