
Health Care & Wellness Committee

SB 5629

Brief Description: Concerning pregnancy prevention programs.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Keiser, Fairley, Kline, Marr, Prentice, Franklin, Murray, King and Brown.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes state agencies to apply for sexual health education funding for medically and scientifically accurate programs, and deletes requirements for the Department of Health to apply for certain federal abstinence grants.

Hearing Date: 3/19/09

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7103)

Background:

Abstinence Education Funding.

As part of federal welfare reform, adopted in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, federal funds have been made available annually to the states to be used exclusively for abstinence education for adolescents. The states could request funding based on a statutory formula related to the number of low-income children in the state. State programs were required to meet specified requirements to qualify as abstinence education programs.

Washington welfare reform, enacted in response to federal welfare reform, includes offering recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children with family planning information and assistance, including alternatives to abortion, and other available locally based teen pregnancy programs. It directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to cooperate with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to reduce the rate of illegitimate births and abortions. It also directs the Department of Health (DOH) to maximize federal funding for

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

abstinence education programs by making timely application for these federal funds. The DOH is directed to contract with entities qualified to provide abstinence education. A joint legislative committee was created to review and provide oversight of the abstinence education programs.

Healthy Youth Act.

As enacted in 2007, the Healthy Youth Act requires a public school that offers sexual health education to assure, among other things, that the education is medically and scientifically accurate, is age-appropriate, includes information about abstinence and other methods of preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and is consistent with the January 2005 *Guidelines for Sexual Health Information and Disease Prevention*.

Under the Healthy Youth Act, "medically and scientifically accurate" means information verified by research in compliance with scientific methods that is published in peer-review journals, where appropriate, and recognized as accurate and objective by expert professional organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the DOH, and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Summary of Bill:

State agencies are authorized to apply for sexual health education funding for medically and scientifically accurate programs as defined by the Healthy Youth Act, including programs on abstinence, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and prevention of unintended pregnancies. These programs must be evidence-based, use state funds cost-effectively, maximize federal matching funds, and be consistent with the Healthy Youth Act, as existing on that act's effective date.

"Evidence-based" means a program that uses practices proven, to the greatest extent possible through scientific methods, to be effective and beneficial for the target population.

The requirements are deleted related to state applications for federal grants for abstinence education and to state contracts with entities for abstinence education and motivation programs. The Legislature's joint committee for review and oversight of the abstinence programs is also deleted.

The provision requiring family planning information to be offered to recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children refers to locally based unintended pregnancy prevention programs, rather than to teen pregnancy programs. The requirement for the DSHS to cooperate with the OSPI to reduce the rate of illegitimate births and abortions is changed to refer to reducing the rate of unintended pregnancies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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