
Health Care & Wellness Committee

SJM 8004

Brief Description: Concerning Universal Health Care.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Bateman, Lovelett, Nobles, Stanford, Trudeau, Valdez and Wellman.

Brief Summary of Joint Memorial

- Requests the federal government to create a universal health care program, partner with Washington to implement a single-payer health care system, or remove federal restrictions on Washington's ability to create a universal health care system.

Hearing Date: 3/21/25

Staff: Kim Weidenaar (786-7120).

Background:

Universal Health Care.

In 2019 the Legislature established a Universal Health Care Work Group (Work Group). The Work Group issued its final report on January 15, 2021. It defined universal health care to mean that all Washington residents can access essential, effective, appropriate, and affordable health care services when and where they need it. The Work Group developed three models for realizing universal health care and analyzed each based on expected costs, access, equity, governance, quality, administration, affordability, and feasibility.

In 2021 the Legislature established the Universal Health Care Commission to implement immediate and impactful changes in Washington's health care access and delivery system and to prepare Washington for the creation of a health care system to provide coverage and access

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through a universal financing system, including a unified financing system, once federal authority has been acquired.

The State-Based Universal Health Care Act of 2023.

House Resolution 6270, introduced in the 118th Congress, known as the State-Based Universal Health Care Act of 2023, establishes the option for states, or groups of states, to waive certain federal health insurance requirements and provide residents with health insurance benefits plans through state-administered programs. Such state programs must cover 95 percent of the residents in the state within five years, and the state program's benefits must be at least as comprehensive and affordable as the coverage under the equivalent federal programs. The state programs would be supported with funds from the replaced federal programs, including Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, certain federal tax credits, and premium assistance funds.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature requests the federal government to:

- create a universal health care program to ensure that every Washington resident and the country has timely access to health care services without incurring debt;
- partner with Washington to reduce barriers and allow Washington to successfully implement a universal health system for the people of Washington, such as passing legislation similar to the State-Based Universal Health Care Act of 2023; or
- grant Washington the appropriate waivers to remove the restrictions on the state's ability to create a universal health care system.

Copies of this Memorial must be immediately transmitted to the President of the US, the US Department of Health and Human Services Secretary, the US Department of Labor Secretary, the President of the US Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, each member of Congress from Washington State, and the federal agencies involved with granting the requested necessary waivers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Upon enactment.