

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1536

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Appropriations*

Title: An act relating to hospice benefits.

Brief Description: Continuing hospice services an additional two years for medical assistance recipients.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Anderson, Moyer, Sprenkle, Paris, Wynne, Jacobsen and Winsley.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Appropriations, March 5, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 29 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Inslee, Vice Chair; Spanel, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Morton, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Belcher; Bowman; Braddock; Brekke; Dorn; Ebersole; Ferguson; Fuhrman; Hine; Holland; Lisk; May; McLean; Mielke; Nealey; Peery; Pruitt; Rust; H. Sommers; Valle; Vance; Wang; and Wineberry.

Staff: Wayne Kawakami (786-7384).

Background: The 1990 legislative session extended optional Medicaid hospice benefits through the end of the current biennium. Hospice care is generally recognized as the broad spectrum of care provided to terminally ill patients. The focus of hospice care is on physical and psychological comfort rather than cure. The objective of hospice care is to keep the patient at home, with inpatient hospital care used only as necessary.

During the state fiscal year 1990, 26 eligible Medicaid recipients elected hospice services. Current law includes a sunset provision for termination of the benefit on March 31, 1990.

Summary of Bill: This bill extends the sunset of optional Medicaid hospice benefits to June 30, 1993.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Hospices have proved to be cost effective. Federal Health Care Finance Authority Rules have created confusion regarding Medicare and Medicaid coverage for hospice services. This extension will permit time to resolve the coverage issue. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) supports the bill.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Elaine McIntosh and Betty Jorgensen, Washington State Hospice Organization; and Les James, DSHS.