

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1672

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES,
MARCH 30, 1993**

Brief Description: Creating the eye care for the homeless program in Washington.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Wineberry, J. Kohl, Wood, Anderson, Sheldon, Veloria, Scott, Jones, Ludwig, Brough and Foreman)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Talmadge, Chairman; Wojahn, Vice Chairman; Deccio, Erwin, Franklin, Fraser, Hargrove, McAuliffe, Moyer, Niemi, Prentice, Quigley, Sheldon, and Winsley.

Staff: Scott Plack (786-7409)

Hearing Dates: March 30, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Among the numerous barriers that many homeless people have to achieving self-sufficiency is impaired vision. There is currently no formalized coordination in connecting the homeless who are in need of vision services with providers of those services.

SUMMARY:

The Eye Care For The Homeless Program is created. The Secretary of DSHS is required to provide coordination of the efforts of nonprofit organizations who work with the homeless, the Washington Optometric Association and the providers of vision services, the Washington Academy of Eye Physicians and the Opticians Association of Washington. The coordinated efforts shall be directed to the provision of vision services to the homeless free of charge. The secretary shall enter into agreements identifying cooperative agencies and the circumstances under which specified services will be delivered.

DSHS shall pay for the eyeglass hardware to the extent it is consistent with the department's budget. The department is required to seek private sector funding for this program.

The use of used frames for the program is allowed and providers are absolved from civil liability.

Ophthalmologists, optometrists and dispensing opticians are immune from liability for free vision care or eyeglasses provided at or below cost to the homeless. The immunity does not apply to acts or omissions of gross negligence or intentional conduct.

Eye care providers may seek third-party reimbursement for goods and services provided to the homeless. If they obtain third-party reimbursement, the immunity from liability provisions do not pertain.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

While DSHS assistance programs provide vision care services, some homeless persons are not eligible for these services and fall between the cracks. The program will coordinate private providers to offer these services to the homeless. The bill also offers liability protections to providers who want to offer free vision care services to the homeless.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

We do not need this program. There are plenty of private organizations that provide vision care services and they are already capable of coordinating together to serve the homeless.

TESTIFIED: Jeff Graham, DSHS (pro); Ron Wagner, Carla Grauegerton, WAEPS, OAW (pro); Donna Bean (con)