

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2396

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE, FEBRUARY 24, 1994

Brief Description: Requiring prisoners to make a one dollar payment for each medical visit.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Corrections (originally sponsored by Representatives Orr, Morris, Sommers, Dellwo, Padden, Conway, Linville, Kremen, Chandler, Foreman, Lisk, Long, Johanson, Silver, Cothorn, Kessler, J. Kohl, Chappell, Romero, Holm, Jones, Sheldon, Eide, Rayburn, L. Johnson, Springer and H. Myers)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Ludwig, Vice Chairman; Hargrove, Nelson, Roach and Schow.

Staff: Susan Mahoney (786-7717)

Hearing Dates: February 24, 1994

BACKGROUND:

One of the fastest growing costs in our prison system is inmate health care. Since 1986, health care costs for inmates have doubled, from \$10.97 million in 1986 to \$22.23 million in 1992. In 1992 health care costs increased by 14 percent.

The current Department of Corrections' (DOC) policy is to provide, at a minimum, a degree of care which is designed to reasonably respond to an inmate's serious medical and dental needs. DOC is required to pay for all inmate health care attended to under this policy. There are no provisions under current law authorizing the requirement for an inmate to share in any part of the health care costs.

Some local jurisdictions have required co-payments by inmates for medical visits. Questions have arisen as to whether the facilities have the authority to have such a policy. Co-payments have been found to reduce health care costs by discouraging over-utilization and inappropriate use of health care services. No one is refused medical care if they are unable to pay.

SUMMARY:

A DOC inmate, unless they are unable to pay, must make a \$5 co-payment for medical visits. The inmate may pay at the time of the visit or have the co-payment deducted from his or her personal account.

There is no co-payment charged for follow-up visits that are related to the original diagnosis. Mental health care visits and medical visits to obtain prescribed pharmaceuticals or for readily apparent injuries or traumas shall not be subject to a co-payment fee.

No medical care may be withheld from an inmate due to lack of funds.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

The inmate co-payment amount is changed to not less than \$1. Local jails are allowed to implement a co-payment policy.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Co-payments will help cut costs of inmate health care and promote more responsible use of health care by inmates.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Representative Orr, prime sponsor