

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5444

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 25, 1993

Brief Description: Eliminating the termination of hospice care and service coverage as medical assistance.

SPONSORS: Senator Talmadge; by request of Department of Social and Health 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, Sheldon, and Winsley.

Staff: Scott Plack (786-7409)

Hearing Dates: February 9, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Hospice benefits provided through the state's medical assistance program expire on June 30, 1993, unless the sunset provision is repealed by the Legislature. Currently, categorically needy medical assistance clients are covered under hospice benefits but terminally ill medically needy clients are not. It has been found that providing hospice care is a cost effective and successful policy.

SUMMARY:

The sunset provision terminating hospice benefits provided through the medical assistance program is eliminated. Hospice benefits are extended to those categorized as medically needy as well.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

This bill eliminates the sunset provision on hospice benefits for categorically needy medical assistance clients and extends this benefit to terminally ill medically needy clients. Hospice care is an important service for terminally ill clients and their families. Since hospice care was approved as a covered service for categorically needy clients in July, 1989 over 150 clients have chosen hospice care rather than traditional treatment of their terminal conditions. The

number of clients choosing hospice services has increased each year since 1989.

Hospice care could also provide an important benefit for terminally ill medically needy clients. These clients have slightly higher incomes and resources than categorically needy clients, but still meet the other categorical requirements for eligibility as well as have documented medical expenses. The bill includes hospice care as a covered service for medically needy clients.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Jim Peterson, Assistant Secretary, DSHS Medical Assistance Administration; Gail McGaffick, Washington State Hospice Organization, Home Care Association of Washington; Jim Grant, Good Samaritan Hospice; Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association; Beverly Jacobson, Washington State Medical Association SAHC