

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1029

As Passed House:

February 17, 1995

Title: An act relating to adoption of the uniform benefits package.

Brief Description: Modifying adoption of the uniform benefits package.

Sponsors: Representatives Dyer, Carlson, Benton, Cooke, Horn, Schoesler, Johnson, Thompson, B. Thomas, Radcliff, Hickel, Chandler, Mastin, Mitchell, Grant, Foreman, Sehlin, Sheldon, Huff, Mielke, Talcott and Hymes.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 1/17/95, 1/19/95, 1/27/95 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/17/95, 66-28.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Dyer, Chair; Backlund, Vice Chair; Hymes, Vice Chair; Casada; Crouse; Morris; Sherstad and Skinner.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Dellwo, Ranking Minority Member; Cody, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Conway.

Staff: Bill Hagens (786-7131).

Background: The Washington Health Services Act was enacted into law in 1993 and includes the following elements: universal access by 1999; employer/individual mandates; a uniform set of health services, including the Uniform Benefits Package [UBP] and population-based public health services; assistance for low-income persons through the Basic Health Plan [BHP] and Medicaid expansion; reformed insuring entities [Certified Health Plan's--CHP's] and health purchasing insurance cooperatives [HPIC's or Alliances]; capitated-managed care; a maximum premium [cap]; a state-wide health data system; a full-time commission; taxes upon tobacco, alcohol, hospitals and certified health plans allocated to administration, BHP and medicaid expansion; health data system, and public health services.

The Washington Health Services Commission was required to submit a proposed uniform benefits package to the Legislature by December 1, 1994. Provisions related to the approval of the uniform benefits package state:

The legislature may disapprove of the uniform benefits package . . . by an act of law any time prior to the thirtieth day of the following regular legislative session. If such disapproval action is taken, the commission shall resubmit a modified package to the legislature within fifteen days of the disapproval. If the legislature does not disapprove or modify the package by an act of law by the end of that regular session, the package is deemed approved.

In effect, if the Legislature does not disapprove by the end of February 8, 1995, the UBP is deemed approved effective July 1, 1995. Disapproval must be in the form of a statutory measure adopted by a constitutional majority of the House and Senate and signed by the Governor.

The proponents of HB 1029 feel that the current procedure unnecessarily limits the legislative deliberation of the benefits package.

Summary of Bill: Current procedures are modified to render the commission's proposed uniform benefits package a recommendation to the Legislature requiring affirmative legislative action to take effect.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 1995.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1995.

Testimony For: The bill is necessary to give the Legislature appropriate review of the uniform benefits package.

Testimony Against: The present statute should not be changed because, while it provides the Legislature review, it also controls the tendency of the Legislature to unnecessarily expand the uniform benefits package.

Testified: Carol Monohon, Association of Washington Business (pro); Carolyn Logue, National Federation of Independent Businesses; Dennis Warren, Washington Association of Insurance Underwriters (pro); Gary Smith, Independent Business Association (pro); Mel Sorensen, Washington Physicians Service and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Oregon (pro); Don Brennan, Health Services Commission; Dr. Peter McGough, Washington State Medical Association; Jim Whittenburg; Bob Furst, American Association of Retired Persons; Bob Cihak; and Mary Jo Wilcox,

Washington Assembly of Citizens with Disabilities (con).