

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1714

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, April 1, 1997

Title: An act relating to basic health plan eligibility for persons eligible for medicare.

Brief Description: Establishing basic health plan eligibility for certain persons eligible for medicare.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representative McMorris).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/27/97, 4/1/97 [DP-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Benton, Franklin, Strannigan and Wojahn.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people 65 or older and certain disabled people. Medicare Part A refers to hospital insurance, limited nursing home care, home health, and hospice.

Generally, those 65 and older can get premium-free Medicare Part A benefits based on their or their spouse's employment. Some, however, do not have enough Social Security work credits. They are eligible for Part A benefits, but must pay a monthly premium to receive them.

To be eligible for coverage by the state's Basic Health Plan, a person must not be eligible for Medicare. A person is considered eligible for Medicare even if the requirement to pay premiums prevents them from enrolling. Thus, some people meet all the requirements for being a subsidized enrollee in the Basic Health Plan, except that they are eligible for Medicare Part A coverage that they cannot afford.

The Health Care Authority estimates that between 7,400 and 11,400 people in Washington are eligible but not enrolled in Medicare Part A and have an income of less than 200 percent of poverty.

Summary of Bill: A person who is eligible for Medicare is eligible to enroll in the Basic Health Plan as a subsidized enrollee if the person: (1) pays premiums in order to receive Medicare Part A coverage; (2) worked, or has a spouse that worked, for an employer who did not make contributions to Social Security, thus making the individual ineligible for

premium-free Medicare Part A coverage; and (3) meets the eligibility criteria established by the Basic Health Plan administrator.

Other technical changes are made.

The bill contains a null and void clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for original bill. Requested for second substitute bill March 24, 1997.

Effective Date: Sections 1 and 2 take effect January 1, 1998. The remainder of the bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is intended to provide access to health insurance to a relatively small group of persons who, because of some unique circumstances, do not have access to Medicare or to the BHP.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Cathy McMorris, prime sponsor (pro).