

ANALYSIS OF HOUSE BILL 1452

Making available cancer screening to low-income women.

SPONSORS: Representatives Astama and Huff.

BACKGROUND: Breast cancer is the leading cause of death from all causes of women between the ages of 35 and 54. In Washington State there were an estimated 3,800 breast cancer diagnoses a year which resulted in 900 deaths. All women are at risk for breast cancer. The two most significant risk factors are being female and getting older. 18.4 percent of all breast cancers occur in women ages 40-49. Approximately 200 women will be diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer in 1999. Over 50 of this total are expected to die from the disease this year.

However, when detection is early there is a greater chance of cure and more treatment. There is no known cure for advanced breast or cervical cancer. Mortality rates for both cancers are falling, and drop is attributed to better and more frequent screenings, as well as to more effective treatment. Women whose income is too high to make them eligible for Medicaid but too low to afford health care insurance or women who have lost their health care insurance as a divorcer who work for companies that don't provide health care insurance, run the risk of not having access to preventive health care.

The American Cancer Society recommends mammogram screening everyone to two years for women between the age of 40 and 49, with annual screening thereafter. They also recommend that women 18 years and older should have a Pap test and pelvic exam every year. The average cost of screenings is \$200 per patient.

Currently the state does not have a non-Medicaid program for screening low income women between the ages of 40 and 49 for breast and cervical cancer.

SUMMARY: The Department of Health is required to develop a program for making breast and cervical cancer screening available to low income women between the ages of 40 and 49. The department is required to define low income and administer the program with no more than ten percent of the total appropriation. The department is also required to report to the Legislature by December 1, 2000, and annually thereafter on the department's administrative expenditures, county administrative expenses, expenses for direct services, and the number of women served by the program.

An appropriation of two million dollars or as much as may be necessary is requested from the general fund.

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