

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 5437

As Passed Senate, March 9, 1999

Title: An act relating to health maintenance organizations' reimbursement of podiatric physicians and surgeons.

Brief Description: Reimbursing podiatric physicians and surgeons.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Deccio, Franklin, Heavey, Prentice, Sellar, Shin, Bauer, Kline, Winsley, Patterson and B. Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/4/99, 2/22/99 [DPA].
Passed Senate, 3/9/99, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; Costa, Deccio, Franklin, Johnson and Winsley.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: There are three classes of physicians authorized to provide foot care services within their scope of practice: allopathic physicians and surgeons (M.D.), osteopathic physicians and surgeons (D.O.), and podiatric physicians and surgeons (D.P.M.).

Current law prohibits disability carriers and health care service contractors from discriminating between allopathic, osteopathic, and podiatric physicians and surgeons. However, a similar law does not exist as to health maintenance organizations. There is concern that this allows HMOs to reimburse podiatric physicians less than other physicians for performing identical treatments or procedures.

Summary of Bill: Except to the extent that an HMO contracts with a group medical practice which only treats that organization's patients, it may not discriminate in the terms and conditions, including reimbursement, for the provision of foot care services between physicians and surgeons licensed as podiatric physicians and surgeons, allopathic physicians and surgeons, or osteopaths.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is not a mandate. Aside from eliminating the artificial savings created by discrimination, it will lead to increased costs. It is a nondiscrimination bill that is consistent with current law as to other health insurance entities.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Frank Morrison, Melanie Stewart, Washington State Podiatric Medical Assn. (pro).