

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1741

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, February 21, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to health care benefits for blind vendors.

**Brief Description:** Providing a plan of health insurance for blind vendors.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Hunt, Fromhold, Alexander and Armstrong).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 2/20/02, 2/21/02 [DP-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

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

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

**Staff:** Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

**Background:** The Business Enterprise Program trains and licenses legally blind people to manage vending routes, gift shops, and food service facilities in government buildings. There are currently 19 vendors in the program, which is administered by the State Department of Services for the Blind. The vendors are not state employees, and as such, are not eligible for health insurance through the Public Employees' Benefits Board.

**Summary of Bill:** The Public Employees' Benefits Board must offer a health insurance plan to blind licensees participating in the business enterprise program. The plan must include benefits substantially similar to those offered state employees.

The costs for those licensees choosing to enroll may be paid for from net proceeds from vending machines operated in public buildings under the business enterprise program. Family insurance benefits are the sole responsibility of the individual blind vendors.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** These vendors are about as close to state employees as one can be and yet are not afforded the insurance benefits of state employment. These jobs tend to be low paying, making insurance difficult to afford. The bill uses an existing income stream to fund

the insurance coverage. These vendors provide a good service and deserve access to state health insurance.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Representative Hunt, prime sponsor (pro).