

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6586

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 6, 2002

Title: An act relating to the human immunodeficiency virus insurance program.

Brief Description: Transferring the human immunodeficiency virus insurance program to the department of health.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau and Deccio; by request of Department of Health.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/31/02, 2/6/02 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Parlette.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: The Acquired Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome Insurance Program is a state program which pays for health insurance coverage for persons with AIDS. Created as a pilot project by the Legislature in 1989, the program was made permanent in 1993. Also known as the Evergreen Health Insurance Program (EHIP), it is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) through a contract with the Lifelong Aids Alliance. The program has served over 2300 persons since its inception.

Eligibility for EHIP is determined by DSHS. Current requirements limit the program to Washington residents, not otherwise eligible for Medicaid, earning less than 370 percent of the federal poverty level (\$31,788 per year for a family of one), with assets (excluding house and car) of not more than \$15,000.

The Department of Health (DOH) also provides a number of services to those with HIV or AIDS, including a federally funded early intervention insurance program that is similar to EHIP. It is suggested that responsibility for EHIP be transferred to DOH, and the enabling statute be updated to allow for the creation of a single streamlined HIV/AIDS education, prevention, early intervention, and health insurance program.

Summary of Bill: The statute creating the Acquired Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome Program in the Department of Social and Health Services is repealed. The program is reauthorized within the Department of Health with the following changes:

- Insurance may be purchased on behalf of those with HIV, whether or not they have had an AIDS diagnosis;
- The program is no longer limited to using only state funds;
- In addition to purchasing insurance for those eligible for "continuation coverage" and group policies, the program is explicitly authorized to pay for insurance for those who are eligible for individual policies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2002.

Testimony For: The bill clarifies the law, reduces duplication, and improves services to citizens. The Evergreen Insurance Program is part of the overall state effort which has reduced AIDS related deaths in the state. In simply transferring the program from one agency to another, the bill is cost neutral. This program will fit well with other Department of Health programs for persons with HIV and AIDS.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Raleigh Watts, Department of Health; Chuck Kuehn, Lifelong Aids Alliance; Mark Garrett, Evergreen Health Insurance Program.