
Health Care Committee

SCR 8419

Brief Description: Creating a joint select committee on health disparities.

Sponsors: Senators Franklin, Deccio, Thibaudeau, Keiser, T. Sheldon, McAuliffe and Kohl-Welles.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a joint select committee to address health disparities in Washington.

Hearing Date: 2/26/04

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), members of racial and ethnic minority groups tend to have poorer health and a higher frequency of premature death than Caucasians. The CDC attributes these differences to a combination of genetic variations, environmental factors, and specific health behaviors.

In May 2001, the Washington State Board of Health issued a report on health disparities in Washington which made similar findings to the CDC as to the occurrence of disease and premature death among racial and ethnic minorities in the state. The report made several recommendations to address these findings including:

- Collecting data on the racial and ethnic composition of various professions;
- Establishing guidelines for programs that seek to increase the number of minority health care workers;
- Facilitating the training and credentialing of minorities with prior health care experience;
- Encouraging the use of Graduate Medical Education funds to diversify the health care workforce;
- Developing a report card to assess the diversity of the health care workforce; and
- Coordinating health care workforce diversity efforts among public and private entities.

Summary of Bill:

A joint select committee is created to identify ways to improve health care status and address health disparities in communities of color. Specifically, the committee must consider the impact of early childhood development programs on reducing health disparities; barriers to culturally and

linguistically appropriate health care; ways to increase the number of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the health care workforce; ways to determine the racial and ethnic composition of the health care workforce; and the impact of reductions in health care expenditures on communities of color.

The committee is comprised of four members of the House of Representatives and four members of the Senate. Members shall come from committees with jurisdiction over health care and education issues. Members of the American Indian Health Commission, the Commission on African-American Affairs, the Commission on Asian-Pacific American Affairs, and the Commission on Hispanic Affairs are to provide input in the process. The recommendations of the committee are to be submitted to the Legislature by November 1, 2005.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.