

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5236

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, January 30, 2003

Title: An act relating to offering health care benefit plans to school district employees.

Brief Description: Offering health care benefit plans to school district employees.

Sponsors: Senators Parlette, Thibaudeau, Winsley, Keiser, Carlson, Honeyford, McAuliffe, Mulliken, Kohl-Welles, Hale, Roach, Esser, Brandland and Eide.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/29/03, 1/30/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5236 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Brandland, Franklin, Keiser, Parlette and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: In 2002, the Legislature passed SHB 2536. By directing the state Health Care Authority (HCA) to charge school districts a composite rather than a tiered rate, the bill was meant to reduce the cost to those districts of purchasing employee health insurance through the HCA. It requires K-12 employees participating in HCA plans to pay the same employee premiums as state employees pay.

The new law, however, is not working as intended, due to imprecise language interpreted by the HCA in a way that does not reduce school district costs.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The 2002 law is amended to clarify, with more precise language, the cost to school districts of enrolling in health care plans of the HCA. K-12 employees participating in the HCA plans are required to pay at least the same employee premiums as state employees pay.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amendatory language is added to an additional section of the 2002 law to further clarify that law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2003.

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

Testimony For: The bill, which was developed with the assistance of the Health Care Authority, clarifies the law to allow it to work as it was intended. It will assure that more affordable health care options are available for school districts.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Doug Nelson, PSE (pro); John Kvamme, WASA, AWSP (pro); Ellie Menzies, SEIU (pro); Dennis Martin, Health Care Authority.