

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6494

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 4, 2004

Title: An act relating to prohibiting the use of social security numbers by health carriers.

Brief Description: Prohibiting the use of social security numbers by health carriers.

Sponsors: Senators Parlette, Mulliken, Roach and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/29/04, 2/4/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6494 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: A health carrier typically issues to its enrollees a card which the enrollees must present to a treating provider to facilitate claims processing. There is concern that including a person's Social Security number on the card, as some carriers reportedly do, increases the risk of identity theft.

"Identity theft" refers to the unauthorized use of another person's personal identifying information to obtain credit, goods, services, money, or property.

Summary of Substitute Bill: After December 31, 2005, a health carrier that issues a card identifying a person as an enrollee, and requires the person to present the card to providers for purposes of claims processing, may not display on the card an identification number that includes more than a four-digit portion of the person's complete Social Security number. This also applies to cards issued under the Basic Health Plan or Medical Assistance Administration.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill adds an implementation date, allows a portion of the Social Security number to be displayed, rather than prohibiting it altogether, and explicitly applies the restrictions to state programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill will help reduce a person's risk of identity theft. Carriers are in the process of phasing out the use of Social Security numbers, but would appreciate some time to get there. Also appreciated would be the ability to display at least a portion of the Social Security number.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO w/ amendments: Nancee Wildermuth, Regence Blue Shield, PacifiCare, Aetna; Denny Eliason, Washington Dental Service, Rick Wickman, Premera; Davor Gjurasic, Molina.