Washington State
House of Representatives
Office of Program Research

**BILL
ANALYSIS**

Health Care Committee

SSB 5841

Brief Description: Providing for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of asthma.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Keiser, Thibaudeau, Kline, Kohl-Welles and Shin).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes elementary and secondary school students to self-administer prescribed medication to treat asthma or anaphylaxis according to a written treatment plan.

Hearing Date: 3/29/05

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

According to the Centers for Disease Control, asthma is the most common long-term disease affecting children. Asthma is a chronic respiratory disease characterized by episodes or attacks of inflammation and narrowing of small airways. Asthma attacks can vary from mild to life-threatening and involve shortness of breath, cough, wheezing, chest pain or tightness, or a combination of these symptoms. Many factors can trigger an asthma attack, including allergens, infections, exercise, abrupt change in the weather, or exposure to airway irritants. Although asthma cannot be cured, it can be controlled.

Anaphylaxis is an allergic hypersensitivity reaction of the body to a foreign protein or drug. Anaphylaxis can be caused by drugs, insect stings, foods, plants, and inhalants. During anaphylaxis, the patient's blood pressure drops and many tissues may swell, potentially obstructing the airway and resulting in respiratory failure. An injection of epinephrine may be used to treat anaphylactic reactions by raising the blood pressure and opening the airways.

In October 2004, Congress enacted the Asthmatic Schoolchildren's Treatment and Health Management Act of 2004 (Act). The Act directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in making certain Public Health Service Act grants or any other asthma-related grant to a state, to give preference to states that require public elementary and secondary schools to allow students to self-administer medication to treat that student's asthma or anaphylaxis. There are no similar provisions in Washington law.

The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) is the state agency which administers state employee insurance benefits and the Basic Health Plan, the state subsidized health insurance

program for low income persons. The HCA is also generally responsible for coordinating efforts among state health care agencies regarding health care cost containment.

Summary of Bill:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Health are required to develop a uniform policy for all school districts regarding the training of school staff about children with asthma. School districts must adopt policies regarding asthma rescue procedures and prevention policies.

All elementary and secondary schools must authorize any student to self-administer medication to treat his or her asthma or anaphylaxis where: (1) a health care practitioner has prescribed the medication and formulated a written treatment plan; (2) the student has demonstrated the skill level necessary to use the medication; (3) the student's parents have completed any written documentation required by the school. The authorization must be renewed each school year.

The HCA must coordinate the development of asthma management programs, including individual asthma management plans, and establish a common asthma registry process for state agencies and health plans delivering state-purchased health care services. In coordinating uniformity in state-purchased health care programs, the HCA's disease management programs must address asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.

The Department of Health must collect data regarding the prevalence of asthma, identifying populations with disproportionate prevalence, and describe successful strategies for diagnosis, prevention and treatment of asthma.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 28, 2005.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.