
Health Care Committee

2SSB 6195

Brief Description: Requiring health impact assessments.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Franklin, Regala, Keiser, Eide, Prentice, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Fraser, Kline and Shin).

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires the State Board of Health to publish health impact assessments that describe the effects of legislation or policies on improving or worsening health disparities.
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Hearing Date: 2/21/06

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The National Institutes of Health have defined "health disparities" as the "differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are several health areas where different racial and ethnic populations experience health disparities as exhibited through poorer health and a higher frequency of premature death than other populations. The CDC attributes these differences to a combination of genetic variations, environmental factors, language and cultural barriers, unequal access to health care, discrimination, and specific health behaviors.

In 2004, the Legislature created the Joint Select Committee on Health Disparities (Committee) through the adoption of Senate Concurrent Resolution 8419. The Committee issued a report of health disparities in Washington on November 1, 2005. The report contained several recommendations and findings for the Legislature's consideration. Among the Committee's recommendations was the creation of an action plan that includes health impact statements that measure and address how social determinants of health can lead to disparities in the health on different populations. In addition, the report recommended the development of tools that systematically review key policies as they are being developed to learn how they may ameliorate or exacerbate the causes of health disparities.

Summary of Bill:

The State Board of Health (Board) must publish health impact assessments in collaboration with the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities (Council), which would

be created upon the passage of 2SSB 6197, and relevant state agencies. A "health impact assessment" is defined as a review of the effect that a legislative or budgetary proposal or other public policy, program, or practice has on improving or worsening health disparities. "Health disparities" are defined as differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, or burden of disease and other adverse health conditions that exist between specific population groups in Washington.

A health impact assessment may be initiated by any member of the Council or any state legislator by written request. The Board shall respond to requests from legislators during the legislative session within ten days. Responses to all other requests must be completed within 90 days. The Board may limit the number of health impact assessments that it conducts to maintain quality within available resources.

The assessments are to be based upon the best available empirical information and professional assumptions available to the Board. Health impact assessments become public documents upon delivery to the requestor.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 14, 2006.

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