

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1441

As of April 22, 2005

Title: An act relating to health insurance coverage for children.

Brief Description: Providing access to health insurance for children.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Clibborn, Morrell, Campbell, Cody, Tom, Moeller, Schual-Berke, Wallace, Grant, Williams, Lovick, Ormsby, Chase, Kessler, Kagi, Hunt, Appleton, Darneille, Upthegrove, Sells, Roberts, Conway, Miloscia, Fromhold, P. Sullivan, Santos, Takko, Green, Wood, Simpson, Hasegawa and Dickerson).

Brief History: Passed House: 4/21/05, 66-32.

SENATE

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: Under federal law, immigrant children who cannot document that they reside in the country legally, and most of those who have entered the country legally within the previous five years, only qualify for emergency medical care under Medicaid.

Prior to October 2002, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) provided these immigrant children the same non-emergency medical and dental services they would have received if eligible for Medicaid, with the state paying 100 percent of the cost, provided their family income was below the federal poverty level. Approximately 22,000 immigrant children received this state-funded medical assistance coverage in Fiscal Year 2002, at a state cost of about \$16 million.

DSHS medical assistance coverage for undocumented and other immigrant children ineligible for Medicaid was terminated in fall 2002, and state funding was instead provided for their coverage by the subsidized Basic Health Plan (BHP). Approximately 13,000 immigrant children initially transferred from DSHS to BHP coverage in late 2002, but the number continuing BHP coverage decreased steadily in subsequent months. It has been suggested that language barriers; the need to make monthly premium payments, co-pays, and deductibles; the mobility of the population; and the lack of dental and other services available under DSHS medical assistance all make the BHP an insufficient method for providing medical coverage for undocumented and other immigrant children ineligible for Medicaid.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services may provide health care services to children with family incomes below the federal poverty level who are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid. The program is to operate within appropriated funds. To accomplish this, the department may impose enrollment freezes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested on engrossed second substitute.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2005.