

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5558

C 267 L 05
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Establishing a prescription drug assistance foundation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, Swecker, Fraser, Keiser, Benson, Brandland, Weinstein, Roach, Rasmussen, McAuliffe, Pridemore, Shin, Rockefeller and Kohl-Welles).

Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care House Committee on Health Care

Background: Individuals in recent years have become much more reliant on prescription drugs to improve and maintain their health. At the same time, retail drug prices have increased substantially, leaving many unable to afford their prescribed medications.

In an effort to address this, pharmaceutical manufacturers have developed prescription drug assistance programs that provide free or low cost drugs to those otherwise unable to afford them. The structure of these programs, however, including their application process and eligibility criteria, varies from company to company. A person is often required to apply multiple times over the course of a year, and must wait while his or her application is processed before returning to his or her physician to get the drugs. There is concern that these factors present significant barriers to the use of these programs by those who need them.

In some states, non-profit organizations have been created to streamline and reduce variations in the application and distribution process of these assistance programs, giving those in need easier access to the free drugs supplied by manufacturers.

Summary: The Health Care Authority is to establish a nonprofit foundation to assist uninsured individuals with an income below three hundred percent of the federal poverty level in obtaining free or low cost prescription drugs. The foundation's five-member board of directors will be appointed by the Governor. No general fund state dollars may be used for the on-going operation of the foundation.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	0	
House	94	0	(House amended)
Senate	44	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 24, 2005