

HB 2574-S2.E - DIGEST

(AS OF HOUSE 2ND READING 2/13/06)

Provides that, for persons with no third-party coverage and with family income up to four hundred percent of the federal poverty guidelines, hospitals must provide a discount for any charges for services provided in the hospital.

Requires each hospital to provide notice to patients of its charity care policies. At a minimum, each hospital must post prominently in locations easily accessible to and visible by patients, including its web site, and in the bill sent to patients, a notice stating that charges for services to people meeting the charity care or discount criteria may be waived or reduced, and regarding the availability of charity care and how to qualify. A notice of charity care policies also may be provided to patients prior to discharge. Posted notices must be in English and also in the five languages other than English that are most frequently spoken in the hospital's service area. The notice must use clear language that would be easily understood by individuals with limited education.

Directs the department of financial institutions to establish a work group to make recommendations related to hospital patient debt repayment and collection practices. The work group shall develop standards for appropriate, predictable, and fair repayment and debt collection practices for hospitals to apply to patients who are eligible for charity care, a sliding fee schedule, or maximum charge as defined in RCW 70.170.060.

Requires the work group to include representatives of the department of licensing, the department of health, hospitals, debt collection agencies, consumers and patients, and other interested stakeholders. The work group shall submit its recommendations to the legislature by November 15, 2006.