

SB 5722-S2 - DIGEST

(DIGEST OF PROPOSED 2ND SUBSTITUTE)

Finds that many small employers struggle with the cost of providing employer-sponsored health insurance coverage to their employees and their employees' families, while others are unable to offer employer-sponsored health insurance due to its high cost. Low-wage workers also struggle with the burden of paying their share of the costs of employer-sponsored health insurance, while others turn down their employer's offer of coverage due to its costs.

Finds that limitations on access to health care services for enrollees in the state, such as in rural and underserved areas, are particularly challenging. It is the intent of the legislature to authorize the administrator to develop alternative purchasing strategies to ensure access to enrollees of the programs administered under this act in all areas of the state, including but not limited to: (1) The use of differential rating for managed health care systems based on geographic differences in costs; and (2) Self-insurance in areas where adequate access cannot be ensured through other options.

Establishes the small business assist program. The legislature intends that the small business assist program make health care coverage more affordable to small employers, their employees, and dependents. By blending private and public funds through the premium assistance option authorized by this section, the legislature intends to increase the number of low-income workers with health coverage in Washington state. The administrator shall offer two options to small employers: (1) Enrollment as a group in a small business assist plan offered by the administrator under this act; and

(2) Enrollment of low-income employees in the premium assistance option authorized in this act.

Provides that, on or before December 15, 2006, the administrator shall provide a report to the governor and relevant policy and fiscal committees of the senate and the house of representatives. The report shall present options for providing a subsidy to small business assist plan enrollees or their employers to help pay the cost of their coverage. The options shall limit subsidies to enrollees with household income up to two hundred percent of the federal poverty level as adjusted for family size and determined annually by the federal department of health and human services.