

**SB 6459-S2.E - DIGEST**

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Finds that: (1) Despite sustained efforts at the federal and state level, too many people in Washington remain without access to appropriate health care. Particularly alarming is the increase in the number of small business employees who are uninsured. Without a health home, many low-income and other vulnerable populations are left to inefficiently navigate a fragmented treatment system that fails to support their long-term well-being.

(2) In recent years, numerous community-based organizations have emerged around the state to address health care concerns at a local level. Through innovation and public/private collaboration, they have demonstrated great success and show even greater promise in improving health care access for local residents. Less remote than state and federal agencies, these organizations have built on local relationships to increase the availability and affordability of services, and coordinate care, making efficient use of a wide variety of community resources to meet community needs.

(3) Many of these organizations have relied on grants from the healthy communities access program, an initiative of the United States department of health and human services that provided funding and technical assistance to support collaborative efforts at the local level to coordinate and strengthen health services for the uninsured and underinsured. The program, however, was recently discontinued, placing these local efforts at risk.

Declares that it is therefore the intent of the legislature to enhance and support the development of collaborative community-based organizations working at the local level to increase access to health care for Washington residents.

Provides that, by July 1, 2008, the administrator of the health care authority shall provide the governor and the legislature with an evaluation of the community health care collaborative grant program, describing the organizations and programs funded and the results achieved. Particularly successful programs shall be highlighted with recommendations on whether, and how, the programs could be replicated statewide. The evaluation shall also summarize any recommendations from the participating organizations regarding ways to improve the grant program and for the state to otherwise support community-based organizations working to improve access to health care for Washington residents, including any changes in state statutes or regulations.