

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2536

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Title: An act relating to the creation of a citizens' work group on health care reform.

Brief Description: Establishing a citizens' work group on health care.

Sponsors: Representatives Cody, VanDeWege, Hasegawa, Ormsby, Seaquist, Morrell, Schual-Berke, Upthegrove and Green.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 1/17/08, 1/24/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a nine-member citizens work group on health care.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Barlow, Campbell, Green, Moeller, Pedersen, Schual-Berke and Seaquist.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Assistant Ranking Minority Member and Condotta.

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

Over the past 20 years, Washington has enacted several policy and budget initiatives to extend health coverage to individuals and families who did not have access to affordable health insurance. The creation of the Basic Health Plan, the expansion of eligibility for the Medicaid program, the creation of the "Cover All Children" program, and the Health Insurance Partnership all combine to extend publically subsidized health coverage to previously uninsured groups. There is still a sizeable population of individuals in Washington who are not covered by health insurance and do not have access to affordable health coverage. There

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is not a consensus about how best to provide access to affordable, quality health coverage to all Washingtonians. Options to provide increased access to affordable health coverage range from private sector modifications of insurance regulation to public sector expansions of existing publically subsidized programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A nine-member citizen work group will be appointed by the Insurance Commissioner to engage in a public process of considering health reform proposals. The citizen work group will be appointed by April 1, 2008 and will report their findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2008. The work group will contract for an independent analysis of five health reform proposals ranging from a limited benefit health coverage plan to a single payer proposal that will provide universal coverage.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The appointing authority for the citizen work group is changed from the Governor to the Insurance Commissioner. The agency responsible for staffing the work group is changed from the Office of Financial Management to the Office of the Insurance Commissioner. A single-payer health care system is added to the list of health reform proposals that will be evaluated. An emergency clause is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is important to conduct a public process to review all types of health reform proposals. This analysis needs to begin right away so the results will be available for the 2009 Legislative Session. Citizens should be engaged in a public process to determine what kind of a health care system we should have in Washington. An emergency clause should be added to the bill so work can begin immediately. A health care reform proposal should include universal access to affordable health coverage.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Cody, prime sponsor; Mike Kreidler, Office of the Insurance Commissioner; Robby Stern, Washington State Labor Council and the Healthy Washington Coalition; Len Eddinger, Washington State Medical Association; Ingrid McDonald, Washington State Office of the American Association of Retired People; Kent

Davis, Washington Health Security Coalition; David McLanahan, Physicians for a National Health Program and the Washington Health Security Coalition; Susan Eidenshink, Health Care for All - Washington; and Erin Dziedzic, the American Cancer Society.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.