HOUSE BILL REPORT
HB 1570

As Reported by House Committee On:
Environmental Health, Select

Title: An act relating to biomonitoring.

Brief Description: Authorizing a biomonitoring program.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, Campbell, Wood, Chase, Morrell, Hunt, McCoy and Kenney.

Brief History:
Committee Activity:
Select Committee on Environmental Health: 2/1/07, 2/27/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes a biomonitoring program and seeks to identify and secure a long-term funding source.
- Requires the Department of Health (DOH) to conduct biomonitoring, in consultation with the Department of Ecology (DOE), local health jurisdictions, and other public health agencies.

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Campbell, Chair; Hudgins, Vice Chair; Newhouse, Ranking Minority Member; Sump, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Hailey, Hunt, Morrell and Wood.

Staff: Brad Avy (786-7289).

Background:

Biomonitoring is the measurement of environmental chemicals in people by analyzing blood, urine, and breast milk samples for pollutants, synthetic chemicals, and industrial compounds.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

It may indicate trends in chemical exposures, identify disproportionately affected and vulnerable population groups, and link exposures and pollution-related disease.

Biomonitoring data is useful for understanding the links between environmental contamination and human exposure and potentially related diseases. Policymakers can use biomonitoring data to assess the effectiveness of regulations and to set priorities for regulatory action.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducts a national biomonitoring program. In recent years, the CDC has also awarded grants to many states, including Washington, to plan state biomonitoring programs. With these funds, the Department of Health (DOH) developed a biomonitoring plan in 2003. The plan identifies biomonitoring priorities concerning chemicals, environmental settings, and populations for monitoring. The plan has not been funded for implementation.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The purpose of the bill is to authorize a biomonitoring program in Washington and to identify and secure a long-term funding source for implementing priorities identified for Washington.

If funds become available, the DOH is required to conduct biomonitoring, in consultation with the Department of Ecology (DOE), local health jurisdictions, and other public health agencies. The biomonitoring program is to assist public health agencies and policymakers in allocating resources to improve environmental public health.

The DOH must adopt guidelines and model protocols to guide state and local agencies conducting biomonitoring. The guidelines and model protocols must address biomonitoring analytical methods, protection of human subject rights, and practices to ensure acknowledgment and respect of cultural differences. The DOH is required to establish a framework for interpretation and communication of biomonitoring data for assessing health impacts.

The DOH may include environmental chemicals in the biomonitoring program using criteria that includes seriousness of health effects, extent of exposure, expected health risks, and incremental analytical cost to perform the biomonitoring analysis for an additional chemical.

By December 1, 2007, the DOH is required to, in consultation with the DOE and local health jurisdictions, provide recommendations to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature for funding the biomonitoring program.

The DOH's implementation recommendations must include the objective of integrating with and complementing nationwide monitoring programs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies that implementation of the biomonitoring program by the DOH is dependent on the availability of funding.

Appropriation: The sum of $90,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, from the State Toxics Control Account to the DOH for the purposes of this act.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for sections 2 and 3, relating to definitions and implementing the biomonitoring program, which takes effect July 1, 2008 if funds are appropriated for the biomonitoring program..

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) People can be tested for chemicals using biomonitoring without the need for scientific models. Biomonitoring is the direct measurement of chemicals in human bodies and gives a much more accurate picture of what people are exposed to, their risk, and how to protect public health. It is a powerful tool that allows targeting for high exposures and efforts to reduce exposure. Careful planning is needed and a scientific advisory group would be useful. The cost can be high with low benefit without a phased planning approach. Biomonitoring can inform public policy and enhance the ability to prevent future exposure. It can also be expensive.

(With concerns) There is support for the idea of a scientific advisory council to oversee the project. There is a need to put into context the source of exposure, how long a chemical is in the body, and the effect of the substance on human health. It is critical to recognize the limitations and to establish a framework so we do not just scare the population. The CDC is already involved at the federal level and it is important to follow their protocols and make sure there is consistency. We should look for gaps in the federal efforts and how we might address them. Biomonitoring can be very expensive. There is concern that estimates are too low for the fiscal note.

Our ability to generate data exceeds our ability to interpret data. We need to establish good science for biomonitoring and make sure we understand the goals and how to interpret data at the back end. We support the intent and recognize the benefits in the direct detection of chemicals in the body, but also recognize potential challenges. It is easy to collect samples, even more difficult to interpret, and then decide what to do with the results.

Our ability to detect chemicals just gets better, but that does not mean because we can detect chemicals that it is a problem. There is a need to manage expectations about what we are going to do with the data and the resulting policy. We forget that chemicals are made to benefit humans and tend to focus on the problems.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Denise Laflamme, Department of Health; David Kalman, University of Washington School of Public Health; and Mark Greenburg, American Chemistry Council.

(With concerns) Heather Hansen, Washington Friends of Farms and Forests; Dan Coyne, Farwest Agribusiness Association; and Grant Nelson, Association of Washington Business Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.