

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5665

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 12, 2007

Title: An act relating to state employee health.

Brief Description: Establishing the state employee health program and a state employee health demonstration project.

Sponsors: Senators Keiser, Fairley, Franklin and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/05/07, 2/12/07 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/28/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5665 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Fairley, Kastama, Kohl-Welles and Marr.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Carrell.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Parlette.

Staff: Rhoda Donkin (786-7465)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Elaine Deschamps (786-7441)

Background: Over the past 20 years research has demonstrated that when employees maintain good health they are absent less, perform better and spend less on health care. Research has further shown that by identifying high risk groups, employers can initiate policies that promote healthy behaviors in their employees, including increasing the use of preventive health care.

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.

Employers can learn about health risks in employees by asking them to voluntarily disclose information about their physical activity, tobacco consumption, eating habits, stress factors, alcohol consumption, use of preventive screenings. This information is tallied on a population basis to give employers an overall health profile of the employees for whom they provide medical benefits.

As the state's largest employer, in 2005 Governor Christine Gregoire authorized the health care authority to work in coordination with other agencies to create a state employee health promotion program for over 300,000 state employees, dependents and retirees. The directive created a program designed to promote healthy choices and improve health care decisions of state employees. In the program's 2006 report to the Governor, it described its initial work, including coordinating with wellness staff in every state agency. The program has a work plan with risk reduction targets for state employees and an evaluation tool to assess its progress.

Summary of Bill: A state employee health program is established in the state health care authority to reduce the health risks of state employees, dependents, and retirees enrolled in the public employees benefits board.

The program is directed to guide the efforts of wellness staff in all state agencies. They can encourage the use of online health assessments, implement evidence-based practices for changing behavior, and contract with outside vendors to evaluate results.

A state employee health demonstration project is authorized and funded in four state agencies. These agencies will operate employee health programs using current and emerging best practices in the field of health promotion, which may include and are not limited to cash incentives for completing health risk assessments, free preventive screenings, on-site weight reduction programs, policies encouraging daily exercise, and improved nutritional standards on agency campuses.

The programs will be evaluated individually and compared to the state population as a whole. The state health employee program will report to the Legislature in December 2008, 2009, and 2010 on the results of the demonstration project.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Health & Long-Term Care): The state employee health demonstration project will measure specific reductions in health risk factors related to obesity, diabetes, and absenteeism; and will also measure reductions in tobacco use and increased use of preventive screenings.

Appropriation: \$1.3 million state General Fund.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Focusing on helping employees stay healthy can improve performance and reduce what employers spend for health care. It is possible to impact health in many ways not being done now. This is a

good start. State workers typically stay in the state system for a long time. We should be investing in their long term health.

OTHER: This is not in the Governor's budget.

Persons Testifying (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Tina Rogers, City of SeaTac; Judith Dahn, Health Resources and Services Administration; Ken Bertrand, Group Health Cooperative; Bonnie Bunning, Department of Natural Resources.

OTHER: Scott Pritchard, Health Care Authority.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): None.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.