

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2117

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Title: An act relating to the basic health plan.

Brief Description: Modifying the basic health plan.

Sponsors: Representatives Cody, Morrell, Kenney and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/17/09, 2/20/09 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Revises the Basic Health Plan to enable unemployed workers to maintain their health and avoid risk of financial hardship related to unpaid medical bills as they search for new employment.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Driscoll, Vice Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Campbell, Clibborn, Green, Herrera, Hinkle, Kelley, Moeller, Morrell and Pedersen.

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146)

Background:

The Basic Health Plan is a state-sponsored program providing low-cost health care coverage through private health plans.

The Basic Health Plan is for Washington residents who are:

- within the Basic Health Plan's income guidelines;
- not eligible for free or purchased Medicare;
- not institutionalized at the time of enrollment; and
- not attending school full-time in the U.S. on a student visa.

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.

Summary of Bill:

The Basic Health Plan is modified to enable unemployed workers to maintain their health and avoid risk of financial hardship related to unpaid medical bills as they search for new employment. A new category of the Basic Health Plan enrollee called an "economic recovery enrollee" is established. To qualify, the enrollee must become involuntarily unemployed on or after September 1, 2008, be unemployed at the time of application, or be receiving unemployment compensation benefits. If an economic recovery enrollee becomes eligible for federal funds to provide health coverage, those funds may be used to subsidize the premiums of the enrollee.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) For workers who have recently lost their job, the Basic Health Plan may be an option for them to continue their health coverage. If federal or state funds become available to help subsidize unemployed workers health coverage, this will be a cost-effective option.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Karen Merrikin, Group Health Cooperative.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.