

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5165

C 22 L 15
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing palliative care in conjunction with treatment or management of serious or life-threatening illness.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Senators Angel and Frockt).

Senate Committee on Health Care
House Committee on Health Care & Wellness

Background: Palliative care is specialized medical care for a person with serious illness that is focused on providing relief from symptoms and improving the quality of life. Services can be provided to patients in any stage of illness to assist with symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, or depression. Palliative care is provided in many settings including homes, hospitals, hospices, nursing facilities, and assisted living facilities.

Hospice care includes a set of services that are generally provided to a person with a life expectancy of six months. Palliative care can be a component of hospice care but is not limited to terminally ill patients. Medicare recently modified their hospice care benefit to allow patients to concurrently receive palliative care and curative care.

Health plans licensed as health care service contractors and disability insurance contractors must offer optional health coverage for home health care and hospice care. Coverage is focused on persons who are homebound and would otherwise require hospitalization. The focus on homebound patients has created some concerns when providing palliative care.

Summary: The home health care and hospice care benefit provided by health plans licensed as health care service contractors and disability insurance contractors is modified. Patients seeking palliative care in conjunction with treatment or management of serious or life-threatening illness need not be homebound in order to be eligible for coverage.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	47	0
House	97	0

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.

Effective: July 24, 2015