

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2408

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to preserving access to individual market health care coverage throughout Washington state.

Brief Description: Preserving access to individual market health care coverage throughout Washington state.

Sponsors: Representatives Cody, Jinkins, Goodman, Johnson, Slatter, Tharinger, Stanford, Macri, Ormsby, Doglio and Appleton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 1/17/18, 2/2/18 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/5/18, 2/6/18 [DPS(HCW)].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires a health carrier to offer qualified health plans in counties where it offers a health plan approved by the School Employees' Benefits Board.
- Reduces the premiums for enrollees in the Washington Health Insurance Pool in counties where there is no other individual market coverage available.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Clibborn, Jinkins, MacEwen, Maycumber, Riccelli, Robinson, Slatter, Stonier and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Graves, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives DeBolt and Harris.

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.

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

Individual Market Coverage.

Individuals may purchase health insurance through the Washington Health Benefit Exchange (Exchange) or in the individual market outside of the Exchange. Most individual market plans are subject to a variety of federal and state requirements, including minimum actuarial values, rate review, and benefit mandates. Most individual plans must be offered in actuarial value tiers: Bronze (60 percent), Silver (70 percent), Gold (80 percent), and Platinum (90 percent).

Through the Exchange, individuals may compare and purchase individual coverage, access premium subsidies, and apply for Medicaid coverage. Premium subsidies are available to individuals between 100 percent and 400 percent of the federal poverty level. Cost sharing reductions are available to individuals between 100 percent and 250 percent of the federal poverty level. Carriers offering plans in the Exchange must offer at least one Silver and one Gold plan. Only health plans certified by the Exchange as qualified health plans (QHPs) may be sold on the Exchange.

The School Employees' Benefits Board.

The School Employees' Benefits Board (SEBB) is a nine-member board that is part of the consolidated school district employees' health benefits purchasing program in the Health Care Authority (HCA). The SEBB's responsibilities include developing benefit plans for school employees and participating with the HCA in coordination with the Public Employees' Benefits Board in the selection of carriers to provide health and dental plans.

The Washington State Health Insurance Pool.

The Washington State Health Insurance Pool (WSHIP) is Washington's high risk pool. The WSHIP provides coverage for:

- individuals ineligible for Medicare who were enrolled in WSHIP plans prior to January 1, 2014;
- individuals ineligible for Medicare who live in a county where individual health coverage is unavailable; and
- individuals eligible for Medicare who do not have access to a reasonable choice of Medicare Advantage plans and provide evidence of rejection for medical reasons, restrictive riders, an uprated premium, preexisting condition limitations, or lack of access to a comprehensive Medicare supplemental plan.

The WSHIP is funded through premiums and assessments on health carriers, Medicaid managed care plans, stop-loss plans, and the state's Uniform Medical Plan (stop-loss plans and the Uniform Medical Plan pay a 1/10 assessment).

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Individual Market Coverage.

For plan years beginning January 1, 2020, a health carrier must offer at least one Silver and one Gold QHP on the Exchange in any county where the carrier offers a SEBB-approved plan to school employees.

The Washington State Health Insurance Pool.

A person eligible for WSHIP coverage because individual health coverage is not available must have his or her premium rate reduced. The amount of the reduction is:

- 80 percent for a person whose current modified adjusted gross income is less than or equal to 200 percent of the federal poverty level;
- 60 percent for a person whose current modified adjusted gross income is greater than 200 percent, but less than or equal to 300 percent of the federal poverty level;
- 50 percent for a person whose current modified adjusted gross income is greater than 300 percent, but less than or equal to 400 percent of the federal poverty level; and
- 30 percent for a person whose current modified adjusted gross income is greater than 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

The reductions are funded through the WSHIP assessments.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill:

- removes the requirement that a health carrier offering a health plan to school employees offer a Silver qualified health plan (QHP) in counties where no health plans are offered on the Exchange;
- requires instead a health carrier offering health plans to school employees to offer at least one Silver and one Gold QHP on the Exchange in any county in which the carrier offers a health plan to school employees beginning in plan year 2020; and
- reduces a person's Washington State Health Insurance Pool premiums by a percentage based on his or her income, instead of basing the premium reduction on the average amount of federal premium subsidies available in the same geographic rating area.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) All Washington residents should have access to affordable health care coverage. Last year, health plan offerings decreased dramatically, almost leading to two counties without any individual market coverage at all. This type of situation causes anxiety in communities and creates planning difficulties for hospitals. There needs to be a long-term solution to this problem. This bill uses a carrot and stick approach to make sure health insurance is available in every county. This bill will tie into School Employees' Benefits Board plans, which should be available in 2020. In the meantime, the Washington State Health Insurance Pool would provide coverage in counties with no coverage, but would only be utilized if carriers withdraw from those counties.

(Opposed) This bill adds new requirements on plans providing coverage to school employees, which is premature. This could lead to fewer carriers opting in and could increase costs, which would be passed down to educators. A working Health Benefit Exchange is important, but the means of achieving that goal in this bill could affect the price of coverage to educators.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Cody, prime sponsor; Erin Dziedzic, Bleeding Disorder Foundation of Washington; Chris Bandoli, Washington State Hospital Association; and Sean Graham, Washington State Medical Association.

(Opposed) Julie Salvi, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Health Care & Wellness be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Cody, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Caldier, Condotta, Graves, Haler, Manweller, Schmick, Taylor, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Harris.

Staff: Catrina Lucero (786-7192).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Health Care & Wellness:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 4, 2018.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is important to ensure that there are no bare counties in the state. Consistent access to health care services reduces the risk of hospitalization and keeps costs down. A viable commercial market supports providers in that commercial rates help to subsidize the Medicare and Medicaid rates. The market is currently unstable. A number of carriers left the market in 2017 and 2018. This initially created two bare counties. Over 300,000 people purchase insurance through the individual market.

(Opposed) Transitioning school employees to the School Employee Benefit Board (SEBB) program is a complicated undertaking. Adding the requirement that carriers offering SEBB plans also offer a qualified health plan through the exchange further complicates this process. These new requirements could lead to a less competitive bidding process, ultimately resulting in higher costs for members.

The individual market and group market are very different. The SEBB is a new pool. The individual market is unstable. The factors a carrier would consider when deciding whether or not to participate in the individual market versus SEBB are not the same. Linking the two markets together could mean that SEBB subsidizes a carrier's individual offerings. This would increase costs for SEBB enrollees.

The provisions related to premium assistance for Washington State Health Insurance Pool enrollees will increase the carrier assessments beyond what is absorbable. The carrier assessment affects 49 percent of carriers. A different funding mechanism is needed.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Erin Dziedzic, Bleeding Disorder Foundation of Washington and Susan G. Komen-Puget Sound; Chris Bandoli, Washington State Hospital Association; and Sean Graham, Washington State Medical Association.

(Opposed) Brian Sims, Washington State School Directors' Association; Julie Salvi, Washington Education Association; Meg Jones, Association of Washington Healthcare Plans; Chris Marr, Kaiser Permanente Washington; and Zach Snyder, Regence Blue Shield.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.