

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESJM 8006

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Brief Description: Requesting that the federal government create a universal health care program.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Cleveland, Billig, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Shewmake, Stanford, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 3/24/23, 3/28/23 [DP], 2/14/24, 2/16/24 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Joint Memorial

- Requests the federal government to create a universal health care program, partner with the state to implement a single-payer health care system, or remove federal restrictions on the state's ability to create a universal health care system.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Riccelli, Chair; Bateman, Vice Chair; Bronoske, Davis, Macri, Orwall, Simmons, Stonier, Thai and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Hutchins, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Harris and Mosbrucker.

Staff: Carter Gale (786-7290) and Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

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

Universal Health Care.

In 2019 the Legislature established a Universal Health Care Work Group (Work Group). The Work Group defined universal health care to mean that all Washington residents can access essential, effective, appropriate, and affordable health care services when and where they need it. The Work Group developed three models for realizing universal health care and analyzed each based on expected costs, access, equity, governance, quality, administration, affordability, and feasibility.

In 2021 the Legislature established the Universal Health Care Commission to prepare the state for the creation of a health care system that provides coverage and access through a universal financing system once Washington acquired federal authority.

The State-Based Universal Health Care Act of 2023.

House Resolution 6270, introduced in the 118th Congress, establishes the option for states, or groups of states, to waive certain federal health insurance requirements and provide residents with health insurance benefits plans through state-administered programs. Such state programs must cover 95 percent of the residents in the state within five years, and the state program's benefits must be at least as comprehensive and affordable as the coverage under the equivalent federal programs. Federal programs include Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, certain federal tax credits, and premium assistance funds. The state programs are supported with funds from the replaced federal programs.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature requests the federal government to:

- create a universal health care program to ensure every resident in the state and country has timely access to health care services without incurring familial debt; or
- absent federal action, partner with the state to implement a single-payer health system by enacting an equivalent to the State-Based Universal Health Care Act of 2023; or
- grant the state the appropriate waivers to remove restrictions on the state's ability to create a universal health care system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Upon enactment.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This legislation is a small, but important step towards building a universal health care system that would benefit all Washingtonians. A universal approach improves costs, outcomes, equity, and efficiency in our health care system. Washington voters also overwhelmingly support pursuing universal health care. While a federal program would produce the best results, the alternative requests in the joint memorial are also valuable. If the federal government is not going to create its own program, then Washington should be empowered to continue doing the important, bipartisan work it has already started.

(Opposed) Competition in the health care market is a better approach and socialized healthcare does not work in other countries like the United Kingdom and Canada. It will lead to greater wait times, lower pay for doctors, and undermine fundamental American principles like choice and personal responsibility. The tax burden of funding universal health care would stress taxpayers who are already struggling. The Legislature should not pass the joint memorial, and it should also stop pursuing universal health care.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Jody Disney, League of Women Voters of Washington; Ronnie Shure, Health Care for All—Washington; Andre Stackhouse, Whole Washington; David Loud, Health Care Is a Human Right Washington; and Paul Benz, Quaker Voice.

(Opposed) Sharon Damoff; Mary Long, Conservative Ladies of Washington; and Laurie Layne.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.