

By: Williams

S.B. No. 261

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

2 relating to the creation of a program to educate the public on the
3 value of health coverage and to increase public awareness of health
4 coverage options.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

6 SECTION 1. Subtitle B, Title 5, Insurance Code, as
7 effective April 1, 2005, is amended by adding Chapter 524 to read as
8 follows:

9 CHAPTER 524. HEALTH COVERAGE AWARENESS AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

10 Sec. 524.001. PROGRAM ESTABLISHED. (a) The department
11 shall develop and implement a health coverage public awareness and
12 education program that complies with this chapter. The program
13 must:

14 (1) increase public awareness of health coverage
15 options available in this state;

16 (2) educate the public on the value of health
17 coverage; and

18 (3) provide information on health coverage options,
19 including health savings accounts and compatible high deductible
20 health benefit plans.

21 (b) The department may include information about specific
22 health coverage issuers but may not favor or endorse one particular
23 issuer over another.

24 Sec. 524.002. PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS. The department

1 shall develop and make public service announcements to educate
2 consumers and employers about the availability of health coverage
3 in this state.

4 Sec. 524.003. INTERNET WEBSITE; PUBLIC EDUCATION. (a) The
5 department shall develop an Internet website designed to educate
6 the public about the availability of health coverage in this state,
7 including information about health savings accounts and compatible
8 high deductible health benefit plans.

9 (b) The department shall provide other appropriate
10 education to the public regarding the value of health coverage.

11 Sec. 524.004. TASK FORCE. (a) The commissioner shall
12 appoint a task force to make recommendations regarding the health
13 coverage public awareness and education program. The task force is
14 composed of:

15 (1) one representative from each of the following
16 groups or entities:

- 17 (A) health benefit coverage consumers;
- 18 (B) small employers;
- 19 (C) employers generally;
- 20 (D) insurance agents;
- 21 (E) the office of public insurance counsel;
- 22 (F) the Texas Health Insurance Risk Pool;
- 23 (G) physicians;
- 24 (H) hospital trade associations; and
- 25 (I) medical units of institutions of higher
26 education;

27 (2) a representative of the Health and Human Services

1 Commission responsible for programs under Medicaid and the
2 children's health insurance program; and

3 (3) one or more representatives of health benefit plan
4 issuers.

5 (b) The department shall consult the task force regarding
6 the content for the public service announcements, Internet website,
7 and educational materials required by this chapter. The
8 commissioner has authority to make final decisions as to what the
9 program's materials will contain.

10 Sec. 524.005. FUNDING. The department may accept gifts and
11 grants from any party, including a health benefit plan issuer or a
12 foundation associated with a health benefit plan issuer, to assist
13 with funding the program. The department shall adopt rules
14 governing acceptance of donations that are consistent with Chapter
15 575, Government Code. Before adopting rules under this subsection,
16 the department shall:

17 (1) submit the proposed rules to the Texas Ethics
18 Commission for review; and

19 (2) consider the commission's recommendations
20 regarding the regulations.

21 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
22 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
23 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
24 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
25 Act takes effect September 1, 2005.