

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 program may not endorse or direct the public to a  
22 specific issuer of health coverage but may include information on  
23 all health coverage issuers authorized to offer health coverage in  
24 this state.

1       Sec. 524.002. PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS. The department  
2 shall develop and make public service announcements to educate  
3 consumers and employers about the availability of health coverage  
4 in this state.

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

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

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

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

18                       (A) health benefit coverage consumers;

19                       (B) small employers;

20                       (C) employers generally;

21                       (D) insurance agents;

22                       (E) the office of public insurance counsel;

23                       (F) the Texas Health Insurance Risk Pool;

24                       (G) physicians; and

25                       (H) hospital trade associations;

26               (2) a representative of the Health and Human Services  
27 Commission responsible for programs under Medicaid and the

1 children's health insurance program; and

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

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

9 Sec. 524.005. FUNDING. In addition to general  
10 appropriations, the department may accept gifts and grants from any  
11 party, including a health benefit plan issuer or a foundation  
12 associated with health benefit plan issuers to assist with funding  
13 the program.

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