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                                                                               S.B. No. 261
         By: Williams
         (In the Senate - Filed January 25, 2005; February 3, 2005, read first time and referred to Committee on State Affairs; March 9, 2005, reported adversely, with favorable Committee
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         Substitute by the following vote: Yeas 9, Nays 0; March 9, 2005,
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         sent to printer.)
         COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR S.B. No. 261
                                                                             By: Williams
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                                       A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
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                                                AN ACT
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         relating to the creation of a program to educate the public on the
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         value of health coverage and to increase public awareness of health
         coverage options.
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                 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:
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         SECTION 1. Subtitle B, Title 5, Insurance Code, as effective April 1, 2005, is amended by adding Chapter 524 to read as
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         follows:
             CHAPTER 524. HEALTH COVERAGE AWARENESS AND EDUCATION PROGRAM
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         Sec. 524.001. PROGRAM ESTABLISHED. (a) The department shall develop and implement a health coverage public awareness and education program that complies with this chapter. The program
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         must:
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                        (1)
                              increase public awareness of health coverage
         options available in this state;
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                                                 public on the value of health
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                        (2) educate
                                          the
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         coverage;
                      and
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                        (3)
                              provide information on health coverage options,
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         including health savings accounts and compatible high deductible
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         health benefit plans.
         (b) The department may include information about specific health coverage issuers but may not favor or endorse one particular
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         issuer over another.
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                 Sec. 524.002.
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                                    PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS. The department
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                develop and make public service announcements to educate
         shall
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         consumers and employers about the availability of health coverage
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         in this state.

Sec. 524.003. INTERNET WEBSITE; PUBLIC EDUCATION. (a)
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         department shall develop an Internet website designed to educate the public about the availability of health coverage in this state, including information about health savings accounts and compatible high deductible health benefit plans.
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                 (b) The department shall
                                                         provide
                                                                      other
                                                                               appropriate
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         education to the public regarding the value of health coverage.
         Sec. 524.004. TASK FORCE. (a) The commissioner shall appoint a task force to make recommendations regarding the health coverage public awareness and education program. The task force is
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         composed of:
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                        (1)
                              one representative from each of the following
         groups or entities:
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                               (A)
                                     health benefit coverage consumers;
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                               (B)
                                     small employers;
                                     employers generally;
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                               (C)
                                     insurance agents;
the office of public insurance counsel;
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                               (D)
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                               (E)
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                               (F
                                     the Texas Health Insurance Risk Pool;
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                               (G)
                                     physicians;
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                               (H)
                                     hospital trade associations; and
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                                                                                of higher
                               (I)
                                     medical units of institutions
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         education;
                              a representative of the Health and Human Services
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                        (2)
                       responsible for programs under Medicaid and the
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         Commission
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         children's health insurance program; and
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                        (3) one or more representatives of health benefit plan
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issuers.

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

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

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

(2) consider the commission's recommendations

regarding the regulations.

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2-20 2-21 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2005.

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