

Amend CSSB 10 (house committee printing) by inserting the following new SECTION to the bill, appropriately numbered, and renumbering subsequent SECTIONS of the bill accordingly:

SECTION _____. (a) In this section:

(1) "Commission" means the Health and Human Services Commission.

(2) "Department" means the Texas Department of Insurance.

(b) The department and the commission shall jointly study a small employer premium assistance program to provide financial assistance for the purchase of small employer health benefit plans by small employers.

(c) The study conducted under this section must address:

(1) options for program funding, including use of money in the Texas health opportunity pool trust fund as described by Section 531.507, Government Code;

(2) coordination with any other premium assistance effort operated, under development, or under consideration by either agency; and

(3) recommended program design, including:

(A) the manner of targeting small employers;

(B) provisions to discourage employers and others from electing to discontinue other private coverage for employees;

(C) a minimum premium, or percentage of premium, that a small employer must pay for each eligible employee's coverage;

(D) eligibility requirements for enrollees for whom financial assistance is provided to individuals;

(E) allocation of opportunities for enrollment in the program;

(F) the duration of enrollment in the program and requirements for renewal; and

(G) verification that small employers participating in the program use premium assistance to purchase and maintain a small employer health benefit plan.

(d) In conducting the study, the department and the

commission may consider programs and efforts undertaken by other states to provide premium assistance to small employers.

(e) Not later than November 1, 2008, the department and the commission shall jointly submit a report to the 81st Legislature. The report must summarize the results of the study conducted under this section and the recommendations of the department and commission and may include recommendations for proposed legislation to implement a small employer premium assistance program as described by Subsection (b) of this section.