

An Act to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Health and Health Care Disparities in the Commonwealth

Draft Bill Summary – 12/19/06

| Bill Section | Chapter section | Summary |
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| 1 | | Adds the Office of Health Equity to the list of offices within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services |
| 2 | | Directs the Health Disparities Council (created under health reform) to advise the Office of Health Equity |
| 3 | | Adds the Director of the Office of Health Equity to the membership of the Disparities Council |
| 4 | | Adds the Office of Health Equity to the description of major offices within EOHHS. The Office is headed by a director, and coordinates all activities of the state relating to disparities reduction. Also sets up an advisory expert committee on women of color. |
| 5 | | Description of activities of the Office of Health Equity |
| | 1 | Definitions |
| | 2 | (Mission of the office) The office will coordinate all activities of the commonwealth to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, plus educating other agencies on disparities, including social factors. The office must prepare an annual plan. |
| | 3 | (Disparities Impact Statement) The office will annually prepare a disparities impact statement on major initiatives of state government, including transportation, housing, etc. as well as health. The statements shall, to the extent possible, include quantifiable impacts and evaluation benchmarks. |
| | 4 | (report card) The office will prepare an annual health disparities report card. Report will include regional progress, after public hearings in regions of the state. |
| | 5 | (Community agency grants program) The office will administer a community-based health agency grant program. The grants shall support efforts by community-based health agencies to eliminate disparities among predominantly underserved populations, including efforts addressing social factors integral to such disparities. Grants may be up to \$250,000 and for up 3 years. |
| | 6 | (data collection coordination) The office will coordinate the data collection, analysis and dissemination activities of all entities involved in the collection of patient and health care professional race, ethnicity and language data. The office may designate a training curriculum for primary data collectors and disseminate best practices for collection of race, ethnicity and language data. |
| | 7 | (community health workers) The office will run a community health worker program. The program shall provide grants to hospitals, |

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| | | community health centers, and non-profit community organizations to use community health workers who have direct knowledge of the communities they serve. Grants may be up to \$250,000 and for 2 years. |
| | 8 | (Community based participatory research grants) Provides grants to support research partnerships between community-based health agencies and academic researchers to eliminate health disparities among predominantly underserved populations. Grants may be up to \$250,000 for up to a 3 year term. |
| | 9 | (health literacy) The office will promote health literacy and establish health information communication guidelines. The guidelines reflect best practices for health-related materials so they are understandable by a broad cross-section of the population, including those without advanced education and those whose first language is not English. |
| | 10 | (workforce development) The office will establish a health workforce development council to coordinate state, local and private sector efforts, including the health professional worker training grant program. |
| | 11 | (regulatory authority) The office may issue regulations to enforce its responsibilities, after public hearings. |
| 6 | | Directs the HealthWorkforce Development program to allocate grants for health workforce diversity. |
| 7 | | Directs the Workforce Investment Board to consult with the Office of Health Equity in setting evaluation standards. |
| 8 | | Sets up a chronic disease self-management program in DPH. DPH will provide grants to non-profit community based organizations to teach chronic disease self management skills. |
| 9 | | State payment rates for physicians must take translation services into account. |
| 10 | | The Office of Health Equity will set the standards on disparities reduction goals for hospitals to get Medicaid rate increases under health reform. |
| 11 | | (Environmental Justice) Creates a statewide communities health index based on a weighted set of primary and secondary indicators of health outcomes in communities designed to show which communities' residents suffer disproportionately high morbidity and mortality. |