

SUBJECT: Expanding assistance for persons in the hemophilia assistance program

COMMITTEE: Public Health — favorable without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Kolkhorst, Naishtat, Gonzales, Hopson, S. King, McReynolds, Zerwas
0 nays
4 absent — Coleman, J. Davis, Laubenberg, Truitt

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 16 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Katherine Zackel, Texans Care for Children)
Against — None
On — Jann Melton-Kissel, Department of State Health Services

BACKGROUND: Health and Safety Code, sec. 41 establishes the hemophilia assistance program (HAP). The program assists persons who have hemophilia and who require continuing treatment with blood, blood derivatives, or manufactured pharmaceutical products and are unable to pay the entire cost of treatment. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) provides financial assistance, through approved providers, for medically eligible persons to obtain blood and other substances for use in medical or dental facilities or in the home.

Persons are eligible to receive services if another person with a legal obligation to provide for them is able to pay for all or part of their care, if a person with a legal obligation to support the person is eligible for some other benefit that would pay for all or part of their care.

Hemophilia is a genetic disorder that affects a relatively small number of people in Texas. It is a very expensive condition to treat and treatment can be complicated. Insurance coverage is very difficult to obtain. For Texans who do not qualify for Medicaid and who cannot afford the premiums of

the Texas High Insurance Risk Pool, the HAP provides financial assistance for receiving blood, blood derivatives and manufactured pharmaceutical products that can be very expensive.

HAP provides assistance to adult residents of Texas who have an income level at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and currently serves 11 individuals statewide.

DIGEST:

SB 1305 would authorize the Department of State Health Services to assist an eligible person who has hemophilia by providing premium payment assistance for insurance coverage.

The bill would specify that a person would not be eligible to receive HAP services solely because the person received benefits through the Texas Health Insurance Risk Pool. An individual would be eligible for coverage from the pool if the individual received financial assistance under the Hemophilia Assistance Program.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2009.