

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass and Be Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

Vote: 5 - 0 - 0

Yeas: Bates, Kruse, Morrisette, Morse, Monnes Anderson

Nays: 0

Exc.: 0

Prepared By: Robert Shook, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 3/12, 4/23

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Directs Department of Human Services to implement Oregon State Hepatitis C Strategic Plan to promote public awareness of hepatitis C and to establish a pilot program for voluntary testing. Authorizes department to award grants or contracts for activities related to provisions of the measure.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Societal and financial burden of chronic hepatitis C among Americans
- Prevention strategies
- High prevalence of undiagnosed cases
- Surveillance and research needed to better understand the distribution and effect of hepatitis C

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: Hepatitis C (HCV) is a disease caused by a virus that infects the liver, and can lead to permanent liver damage as well as cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver failure. It is estimated that 1.8 percent of the U.S. population is chronically infected with HCV, which equates to approximately 65,000 Oregonians. There are between 4,000-5,000 newly diagnosed chronic HCV cases reported to the state each year.

Many people do not know that they have HCV until they have already experienced some liver damage. Between 15 and 40 percent of people who get HCV are able to fight off the virus during the early or acute stage, usually within six months; the rest cannot get rid of the virus and develop a long-term, or chronic, hepatitis C infection, and will have the disease all of their lives unless they are successfully treated with antiviral medicines. Many people find out that they have the virus by accident, when their blood is tested before a blood donation or as part of a regular checkup. Often, people with HCV will have high levels of liver enzymes in their blood.

Heightened awareness, understanding, and enhanced knowledge of HCV are the primary goals of the Hepatitis C Strategic Plan. The plan includes community outreach activities to promote public awareness and knowledge of the risk factors related to HCV, the value of early detection, the availability of screening services and the options available for the treatment of HCV. Staff training at public health clinics, mental health facilities, university clinics, community health centers, and urgent care centers, relating to detection, transmission, and treatment of HCV will also be a major focus of the plan.

Senate Bill 520 directs the Department of Human Services to implement the Oregon State Hepatitis C Strategic Plan, establish a pilot program for voluntary HCV testing, and report on the program's results to the 76th Legislative Assembly.

4/27/2009 4:35:00 PM

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.