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Governor



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To the Honorable Speaker and Members,  
The House of Representatives of the State of Washington

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning, without my approval as to Sections 3 and 17, Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1569 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to improving health insurance coverage by establishing a health insurance partnership for the purchase of small employer health insurance coverage, evaluating the inclusion of additional health insurance markets in the health insurance partnership, and studying the impact of health insurance mandates."

This bill creates the Washington Health Insurance Partnership (WHP), an innovative approach to providing affordable health care in this state. By combining public and private resources, and creating a mechanism to organize and improve access to the insurance market, WHP will offer choice and assistance to small business employees seeking coverage for themselves and their families, and I welcome it.

Section 3 of the bill, which sets forth many of the operational details of the WHP program, is virtually identical to Section 58 of Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5930. However, it adds the requirement that eligible employees who transition from employer-sponsored insurance to the WHP program wait six months before receiving a subsidy. This requirement could unintentionally delay assistance to someone at the very point they most need it – when they have lost their job and are attempting to retain health benefits provided through the WHP.

Section 17 of the bill is an emergency clause, and would allow certain sections of the bill to become effective on July 1. The emergency clause is not essential to the proper and timely implementation of the bill.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Sections 3 and 17 of Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1569.

With the exception of Sections 3 and 17, Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1569 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/  
Christine O. Gregoire  
Governor