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HEPATITIS C EDUCATION PROGRAM

House Bill 5715

Sponsor: Rep. Samuel Buzz Thomas

Committee: Appropriations

Complete to 6-25-98

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5715 AS INTRODUCED 3-26-98

House Bill 5715 would amend the Public Health Code to allow the Department of Community Health to create a Hepatitis Education Program, to hire qualified staff, and to coordinate its services with other local and national programs. Under the new program the department could design and implement strategies for raising public awareness about the personal risk factors and the causes and nature of hepatitis C, and also the value of prevention and early detection, as well as options for diagnosing and treating the disease.

Under the bill and as part of the program, the department also could develop educational programs and materials for physicians and other health professionals, including guidelines for detecting and treating the disease in special populations, and information about research advances. The department also could conduct a statewide needs assessment to collect baseline information including, among other things, the level of public and professional awareness about hepatitis C, the needs of patients and their families, and the services available. Based on the needs assessment, the department could develop, maintain, and make available a service directory.

Under the bill, \$200,000 would be appropriated from the general fund to create the Hepatitis C Education Fund in the state treasury. The state treasurer would direct the investment of the fund, except that interest and earnings of the fund would only be credited to the fund, and money in the fund at the close of the fiscal year would remain in the fund and not revert to the general fund. In addition, the Department of Community Health could deposit funds from state and federal governments and from other public and private entities to the fund. Finally, under the bill, the department would be required to seek a federal waiver or waivers necessary to maximize funds from the federal government to implement the Hepatitis C Education Program.

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