

**Introduced by Senator Polanco**

February 26, 1999

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An act to amend Section 122405 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to hepatitis.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1256, as introduced, Polanco. Hepatitis C: screening.

Existing law, the Hepatitis C Education, Screening, and Treatment Act, requires the State Department of Health Services to make available protocols and guidelines developed by the National Institutes of Health and California legislative advisory committees on hepatitis C for educating physicians and health professionals and training community service providers.

This bill would declare the intent of the Legislature to appropriate an unspecified amount from the General Fund to the department for purposes of screening and treating those individuals of the uninsured population in California who are at high risk for having hepatitis C, and who elect to be screened and treated for this serious disease.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 122405 of the Health and Safety
- 2 Code is amended to read:
- 3 122405. The Legislature hereby finds and declares all
- 4 of the following:

1 (a) Hepatitis C is classified as a silent killer, where no  
2 recognizable signs or symptoms occur until severe liver  
3 damage has occurred.

4 (b) Hepatitis C has been characterized by the World  
5 Health Organization as a disease of primary concern to  
6 humanity.

7 (c) Studies indicate that 1.8 percent of the population,  
8 nearly 4 million Americans, carry the virus HCV that  
9 causes hepatitis C. In California, as many as 500,000  
10 individuals may be carriers and could develop the  
11 debilitating and potentially deadly liver disease  
12 associated with hepatitis C in their lifetime. An expert  
13 panel, convened in March by the National Institutes of  
14 Health (NIH), estimated that 30,000 acute new infections  
15 occur each year in the United States, and only 25 to 30  
16 percent of those are diagnosed. Current data sources  
17 indicate that 8,000 to 10,000 Americans die from hepatitis  
18 C each year.

19 (d) Studies also indicate that 39.4 percent of male  
20 inmates and 54.5 percent of female inmates in California  
21 correctional facilities have hepatitis C, 26 times higher  
22 than the general population. Upon their release from  
23 prison, these inmates present a significant health risk to  
24 the general population of California.

25 (e) It is the intent of the Legislature to study the  
26 adequacy of the health care delivery system as it pertains  
27 to hepatitis C.

28 (f) *It is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate*  
29 *\$\_\_\_\_\_ from the General Fund to the State*  
30 *Department of Health Services for purposes of screening*  
31 *those individuals of the uninsured population in*  
32 *California who are at high risk for having hepatitis C, and*  
33 *who elect to be screened, for this serious disease.*

