

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Sophie Walsh 271-3469

SB 257, establishing a committee to study state guidelines for Medicaid eligibility determinations.

Hearing Date: March 19, 2025

Time Opened: 9:32 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:41 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Rochefort, Avard, Birdsell, Prentiss and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes a committee to study state guidelines for Medicaid eligibility determinations.

Sponsors:

Sen. Reardon
Rep. Ebel

Sen. Long

Sen. Rosenwald

Who supports the bill: Sen. Rosenwald, Stephen Shurtleff, Sarahlynn Williams, Jocelyn Duffy, Janet Altobello, James Mason, Linda Mason, Sarah McCarthy, Suzanne Haldane, and Vernon Hyman.

Who opposes the bill: Julie Smith.

Who is neutral on the bill: Tommy O'Neil on behalf of Sen. Reardon.

Summary of testimony presented:

Tommy O'Neil, New Hampshire Senate Minority Caucus Director

- Mr. O'Neil stated that he is introducing this bill on behalf of Senator Reardon.
- This bill establishes a committee to study the state guidelines for Medicaid eligibility determinations, with the intent of further investigating alternative pathways for determining Medicaid eligibility.
- The concept of this originated from Senator Reardon's experience as Merrimack County Commissioner and the possibility of an alternative, more efficient method to qualify residents seeking admission to the Merrimack County Nursing Home.

- Mr. O'Neil introduced an amendment that expands the duties of the committee and extends the reporting date by one year.

Stephen Shurtleff

- Mr. Shurtleff explained that he met with the administrator of Merrimack County Nursing Home upon assuming his role as County Commissioner last November. At that time, 24 individuals were awaiting admission to the nursing home, and the number has since increased to 36.
- Mr. Shurtleff explained that this delay is caused by the required Medicaid certification, which includes both a health need assessment and a financial affidavit.
- It is Mr. Shurtleff's understanding that the financial affidavit is what is causing this delay. The State has a 60-day time frame to respond to applications; yet oftentimes applicants will learn close to the 60th day that their application is missing necessary information. This causes significant delays in the approval process.
- Mr. Shurtleff noted that many are paying out-of-pocket for nursing home care. This is not sustainable for some individuals.
- New Hampshire is the only state in New England and one of only 9 states nationwide following SSI 209b regulations.
- Other states are following SSA 1634 standards, which is a more straightforward process for applicants.
- Mr. Shurtleff noted that for some of these applicants, waiting 6 months or longer for approval can be both literally and figuratively a lifetime.
- Senator Long referenced the reporting date extension and asked if the complexity of this issue justified the additional time.
- Mr. Shurtleff explained that while he does not believe the issue is very complicated, the legislature may have taken additional considerations that he is not aware of.