



LFB Paper: 285

Title: Health Insurance Coverage for Domestic Partners of State Employees and State Annuitants (ETF)

UW System Position	Description and Rationale
<p>1. SUPPORT</p>	<p><i>Approve the Governor’s recommendation to permit state employees and state annuitants to include domestic partners in the state employee health insurance coverage plans offered by the Group Insurance Board, but correct the bill to include coverage of domestic partner’s minor children dependent on an annuitant for support and maintenance.</i></p> <p>The UW System Board of Regents has gone on record multiple times in support of domestic partner benefits. In the UW System pay parity request adopted in April 2004, the Board said that it “endorses state group health insurance for domestic partners of all state employees, funded from the compensation reserve in the same way as for all other state employees.” The Board is also on record as recently as the October 2006 Board meeting in support of providing domestic partner benefits. UW-Madison is currently the only Big Ten university that does not provide domestic partner health benefits to its employees, placing the institution at a competitive disadvantage with its peers.</p>
UW System Position	Description and Rationale
<p>2. SUPPORT</p>	<p><i>Delete the Governor’s Recommendation. Instead, direct the Office of State Employment Relations to explore providing reimbursement to state employees with domestic partners who do not have health insurance coverage available to them through their own employers by providing a monthly reimbursement equal to the difference between the state contribution share of the single coverage monthly premium cost and the state contribution share of the family coverage monthly premium cost of the lowest-cost tier 1 plan that is available in the county in which the employee resides, but</i></p>

	<p><i>not more than the actual monthly premium cost of the domestic partner's health insurance coverage. Further, direct the Office of the State Employment Relations to: (a) identify any statutory changes that might be required to implement a reimbursement program; and (b) if no such changes are required, develop procedures relating to the certification and reimbursement of domestic partner expenses for health insurance coverage.</i></p> <p>The UW System Board of Regents has gone on record multiple times in support of domestic partner benefits. In the UW System pay parity request adopted in April 2004, the Board said that it “endorses state group health insurance for domestic partners of all state employees, funded from the compensation reserve in the same way as for all other state employees.” The Board is also on record as recently as the October 2006 Board meeting in support of providing domestic partner benefits. UW-Madison is currently the only Big Ten university that does not provide domestic partner health benefits to its employees, placing the institution at a competitive disadvantage with its peers. This option would be a taxable benefit, and therefore would not cover the full cost of insurance. However, it is a step in the right direction.</p>
<p>UW System Position</p>	<p>Description and Rationale</p>
<p>3. OPPOSE</p>	<p><i>Maintain current law.</i></p> <p>Maintaining current law prohibiting domestic partner benefits puts the UW System at a competitive disadvantage with its peers when recruiting faculty and staff. UW-Madison is currently the only Big Ten university that does not provide domestic partner health benefits to its employees.</p>

The Strongly Preferred Option is #1. This option would enable the state of Wisconsin, including the UW System, to offer domestic partner benefits to its employees.