ENROLLED SENATE
BILL NO. 644

By: Monson of the Senate

and

Settle of the House

An Act relating to the Oklahoma State Employees Benefits Council; amending Section 5, Chapter 400, O.S.L. 1992, as amended by Section 10, Chapter 359, O.S.L. 1993 (74 O.S. Supp. 1996, Section 1365), which relates to the Oklahoma State Employees Benefits Council; providing for confidentiality of certain documents; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY Section 5, Chapter 400, O.S.L. 1992, as amended by Section 10, Chapter 359, O.S.L. 1993 (74 O.S. Supp. 1996, Section 1365), is amended to read as follows:

Section 1365. A. The Oklahoma State Employees Benefits Council shall have the following duties, responsibilities and authority with respect to the administration of the plan:

1. To construe and interpret the plan, and decide all questions of eligibility in accordance with this act and the Code;

2. To select those benefits which shall be made available to participants under the plan, according to this act, and other applicable laws and regulations;

3. To retain or employ qualified agencies, persons or entities to design, develop, communicate, implement or administer the plan;

4. To prescribe procedures to be followed by participants in making elections and filing claims under the plan;

5. To prepare and distribute information communicating and explaining the plan to participating employers and participants; provided that neither the Board, health maintenance organizations, nor other third-party insurance vendors shall be directly or indirectly involved in the distribution of said communicated information to participating employers and participants;

6. To receive from participating employers and participants such information as shall be necessary for the proper administration of the plan, and any of the benefits offered thereunder;

7. To furnish the participating employers and participants such annual reports with respect to the administration of the plan as are reasonable and appropriate;

8. To keep reports of benefit elections, claims and disbursements for claims under the plan;

9. To appoint an executive director who shall serve at the pleasure of the Council. The executive director shall employ or

retain such persons in accordance with this act and the requirements of other applicable law, including but not limited to actuaries and certified public accountants, as he or she deems appropriate to perform such duties as may from time to time be required under this act and to render advice upon request with regard to any matters arising under the plan subject to the approval of the Council. The executive director shall have not less than seven (7) years of group insurance administration experience on a senior managerial level or not less than three (3) years of flexible benefits experience on a senior managerial level. Any actuary or certified public accountant employed or retained under contract by the Council shall have not less than three (3) years' experience in group insurance or employee benefits administration. The compensation of all persons employed or retained by the Council and all other expenses of the Council shall be paid at such rates and in such amounts as the Council shall approve, subject to the provisions of applicable law;

10. For plan year beginning July 1, 1993, and all future plan years, to select and contract with federally qualified health maintenance organizations under the provisions of 42 U.S.C., Section 300e et seq. or with health maintenance organizations licensed by the Department of Health pursuant to Sections 2501 through 2510 of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes for consideration by participants as an alternative to the health plans offered by the Board, and to transfer to the health maintenance organizations such funds as may be approved for a participant electing health maintenance organization alternative services;

11. To require vendors offering coverage through the Council, including the Board, to provide such enrollment and claims data as is determined by the Council. The Oklahoma State Employees Benefits Council with the cooperation of the Department of Central Services acting pursuant to Section 85.1 et seq. of this title, shall be authorized to retain as confidential, any proprietary information submitted in response to the Council's Invitation to Bid. Provided, however, that any such information requested by the Council from the vendors shall only be subject to the confidentiality provision of this paragraph if it is clearly designated in the Invitation to Bid as being protected under this provision. All requested information lacking such a designation in the Invitation to Bid shall be subject to Section 24A.1 et seq. of Title 51 of the Oklahoma Statutes;

12. To purchase any insurance deemed necessary for providing benefits under the plan, provided that the only indemnity plan selected by the Council shall be the indemnity plan offered by the Board, and to transfer to the Board such funds as may be approved for a participant electing a benefit plan offered by the Board;

13. To communicate deferred compensation programs as provided in Section 1701 of this title;

14. For the plan year beginning July 1, 1993, and all future plan years, to assess and collect reasonable fees from the Board, and from such contracted health maintenance organizations and third party insurance vendors to offset the costs of administration as determined by the Council. The Council shall have the authority to transfer income received pursuant to this subsection to the Board for services provided by the Board;

15. To accept, modify or reject elections under the plan in accordance with this act and the Code;

16. To promulgate election and claim forms to be used by participants; and

17. To take all steps deemed necessary to properly administer the plan in accordance with this act and the requirements of other applicable law.

B. The Council members shall discharge their duties as fiduciaries with respect to the participants and their dependents of

the plan, and all fiduciaries shall be subject to the following definitions and provisions:

1. A person or organization is a fiduciary with respect to the Council to the extent that the person or organization:

a. exercises any discretionary authority or discretionary control respecting administration or management of the Council,

b. exercises any authority or control respecting disposition of the assets of the Council,

c. renders advice for a fee or other compensation, direct or indirect, with respect to any participant or dependent benefits, monies or other property of the Council, or has any authority or responsibility to do so, or

d. has any discretionary authority or discretionary responsibility in the administration of the Council;

2. The Council may purchase insurance for its fiduciaries or for itself to cover potential liability or losses occurring by reason of the act or omission of a fiduciary, but any such insurance purchased by the Council must permit recourse by the insurer against a fiduciary in the case of a breach of fiduciary obligation by such fiduciary. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as requiring the purchase of any insurance;

3. Except for a breach of fiduciary obligation, a Council member shall not be individually or personally responsible for any action of the Council;

4. Any person who is a fiduciary with respect to the Council shall be entitled to rely on representations made by participants, participating employers, third party administrators and beneficiaries with respect to age and other personal facts concerning a participant or beneficiaries, unless said fiduciary knows said representations to be false;

5. Each fiduciary shall discharge his or her duties and responsibilities with respect to the Council and the plan solely in the interest of the participants and beneficiaries of the plan according to the terms hereof, for the exclusive purpose of providing benefits to participants and their beneficiaries, with the care, skill, prudence and diligence under the circumstances prevailing from time to time that a prudent man acting in a like capacity and familiar with such matters would use in the conduct of an enterprise of like character and with like aims; and

6. The duties and responsibilities allocated to each fiduciary by this act or by the Council shall be the several and not joint responsibility of each, and no fiduciary shall be liable for the act or omission of any other fiduciary unless:

a. by his or her failure to properly administer his or her specific responsibility he or she enabled such other person or organization to commit a breach of fiduciary responsibility, or

b. he or she knowingly participates in, or knowingly undertakes to conceal, an act or omission of another person or organization, knowing such act or omission to be a breach, or

c. having knowledge of the breach of another person or organization, he or she fails to make reasonable efforts under the circumstances to remedy said breach.

SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 1997.