

Health Care Committee

HB 1759

Brief Description: *Allowing for the sale of hypodermic syringes and needles to reduce the transmission of bloodborne diseases.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Darneille, Schual-Berke, McDermott, Santos, Murray, Tokuda and Wood.*

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Allows access to sterile syringes as a way to reduce the spread of blood-borne infections among injection drug users.*

Hearing Date: *2/22/01*

Staff: *Dave Knutson (786-7146).*

Background:

Approximately 41,000 injection drug users live in Washington. Injection drug users are at high risk of blood borne infections, including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis B and C virus. They account for approximately twenty one percent of the state's acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) cases. The sharing of syringes leads to the transmission of these debilitating and costly diseases.

Current state law prohibits a pharmacist from selling clean syringes unless they can satisfy themselves that the device will be used for the legal use intended.

In 2000, the Governor's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS and the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse issued a joint report entitled: Prevention of Blood-Borne Infections. The report recommended allowing access to sterile syringes as a way to reduce the spread of blood-borne infections among injection drug users. Other specific recommendations include:

- 1. Amend RCW 70.115.050 and RCW 69.50.4121 to allow for the pharmaceutical sale of*

sterile syringes.

- a. Sales limited to ten syringes.*
- b. Sales limited to individuals at least eighteen years old.*
- c. Pharmacists should be required to provide drug prevention and treatment materials at the point of sale.*

2. Amend RCW 69.50.421 to allow for the limited possession and sale of sterile syringes for legitimate public health purposes.

Summary of Bill:

Individuals over 18 years of age may possess up to 10 sterile syringes for legitimate public health purposes. Injection syringe equipment may be distributed through pharmacies. Pharmacists will provide drug prevention and treatment materials at the point of sale. Sterile syringes sold under this act must be designed to reduce the risk of an exposure incident after the syringe has been used.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.