

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1703

As of March 23, 2009

Title: An act relating to child immunization exemptions.

Brief Description: Concerning child immunization exemptions.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Cody, Pedersen, Green, White, Wood, Bailey, Moeller, Morrell, Walsh, Nelson and Kenney).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/09, 77-19.

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/25/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Rhoda Donkin (786-7465)

Background: Before the first day of school, students at Washington's public or private schools (preschool through 12th grade) and children attending licensed day care must provide proof of immunization against certain vaccine-preventable diseases as determined by the Washington State Board of Health (BOH). However, a parent or guardian may exempt a child for one of several reasons including if a physician advises against a specific vaccine for a child, a parent certifies the vaccine conflicts with their religious beliefs, or the parent certifies that the parent has a philosophical or personal objection to the child's immunization.

Under the BOH rules, the required immunization schedule includes immunizations against ten diseases, with another disease, pneumococcal, added beginning July 1, 2009.

Nearly all states allow medical and religious exemptions from their school immunization requirements. According to the 2005 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report, 20 states allow exemptions based on philosophical or personal objections.

Summary of Bill: Modifications are made to the process of seeking personal or philosophical exemptions from required childhood immunizations. For this exemption, the parents or guardians must specifically document which vaccines they don't want their child to have, why they don't want them, and that they understand the child may be prohibited from attending school during an outbreak of the disease for which the child has not been immunized. Parents seeking personal or philosophical exemptions must also provide

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certification from a health care practitioner stating they have been told about the risks and benefits of immunizing their child.

In addition to physicians, naturopaths, physician assistants, and advanced registered nurse practitioners may provide either a medical exemption or the certification that they have fully informed parents about immunizations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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