

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2016

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE,
FEBRUARY 27, 1992

Brief Description: Modifying poison information center authority.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives G. Cole, Ballard, Scott, Leonard, Mielke, May, Moyer, Morris, Sprenkle, Paris, Winsley, Mitchell, P. Johnson and Miller)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators West, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; M. Kreidler, Niemi, and Wojahn.

Staff: Sarena Seifer (786-7417)

Hearing Dates: February 27, 1992

BACKGROUND:

Public health and safety and consumer information responsibilities concerning toxic substances involve the Departments of Health, Labor and Industries, Agriculture and Ecology. Current state law authorizes only the Department of Health to support a statewide program of poison and drug information services conducted by poison information centers in Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and Yakima. These centers, housed in hospitals, respond to almost 130,000 calls annually from individuals seeking information on how to handle poisonings or to avoid exposure to pesticides, drugs or other substances. Current state biennial funding pays for approximately 38 percent of the centers' costs.

SUMMARY:

By June 30, 1993, the four poison information programs are to be centralized and coordinated by a single nonprofit center at a place to be determined by the Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH). The single center is required to coordinate, as appropriate, with the Poison Information Center in Portland, Oregon.

Current law specifying the activities of poison information centers is repealed, and the new responsibilities of the single center are specified. The center's services are expanded to include coordination of outreach units and community education concerning occupational risks and

environmental exposures as well as exposure to drugs and poisons. The center is authorized to receive and spend gifts, grants, endowments and any other income from public and private sources.

By December 1, 1992, DOH is required to submit a report to the House Appropriations and Senate Ways and Means Committees on funding, efficiencies and fees associated with establishing a single poison information center. The report must seek to maximize the center's funding through gifts, grants, endowments and other income. The report must assume that general fund state funding will not increase over actual 1991-93 levels.

DOH is directed to establish a system for consulting with other state agency programs to develop a coordinated and consistent response to poison incidents and other toxicological matters.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:

The Department of Health (DOH) is no longer required to submit a report to appropriate legislative committees regarding funding, efficiencies and fees associated with establishing a single poison information center. DOH, in consultation with the current poison information centers, must recommend appropriate funding levels and recommend how the single center should be funded.

The act is made null and void if specific funding for it is not provided in the 1993-1995 biennial budget.

TESTIMONY FOR:

The four hospitals which currently house the poison information centers have faced substantially increased costs and declining state funds for their poison activities. The hospitals can no longer afford to provide poison response for the state and may have to withdraw from the program.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Susie Tracy, Washington State Medical Association and Washington State Poison Center Network (pro); Robb Menaul, Washington State Hospital Association (pro)