

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1253

As Reported By House Committee On:
Health Care

Title: An act relating to licensure of physician assistants.

Brief Description: Modifying provisions regarding physician assistants.

Sponsors: Representatives Dellwo, Morris, Dyer and Wood; by request of Department of Health.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Health Care, February 12, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Dellwo, Chair; L. Johnson, Vice Chair; Dyer, Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Campbell; Conway; Cooke; Flemming; R. Johnson; Lisk; Morris; Thibaudeau; and Veloria.

Staff: John Welsh (786-7133).

Background: Physician assistants are licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine under the supervision and control of physicians or osteopathic physicians. A physician assistant must obtain a separate license for every physician who employs or supervises the practice, and many physician assistants must obtain a number of licenses annually.

In addition, the boards of Medical Examiners and Osteopathic Medicine must approve the employment and supervision of each physician assistant associated with a physician or osteopathic physician. The joint application is submitted by both the physician assistant and the supervising physician, detailing the manner and extent to which the physician assistant would practice and be supervised.

The license of a physician assistant must be renewed annually by the secretary of the Department of Health, and there is no penalty fee authorized for a late renewal.

The practice acts governing physician assistants and osteopathic physician assistants are dated and the language, though parallel, is not consistent.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A physician assistant is issued one license to practice, and is no longer required to obtain multiple licenses for each association with a physician or physician group which supervises or employs the assistant.

However, the boards still must approve the practice arrangement in a joint application from the physician assistant and the physician.

License renewal can be made on a periodic basis, not just annually, as determined by the secretary, who is also authorized to levy a penalty fee for late renewal.

A number of changes of a housekeeping nature are made, clarifying the responsibilities of applicants, the department and the boards, and making the language of the two practice acts consistent.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Changes in the practice act governing physician assistants are extended to osteopathic physicians.

The authority of the board of Medical Examiners to distinguish the level of supervision of physician assistants who complete board-approved programs and pass national board examinations is deleted.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The expense and inconvenience of requiring physician assistants to have multiple licenses for each physician who supervises or employs them should be eliminated, as long as the boards retain the authority to approve their practice arrangements.

The renewal of licenses on a periodic basis, instead of annually, gives the department more flexibility in moving towards a biennial renewal system to cut costs and trim bureaucracy. The authority to charge penalty fees for late license renewal makes the administrative process more efficient.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Patti Rathbun, Department of Health and Board of Medical Examiners (pro); Jeff Larsen, Washington Osteopathic Medical Association (pro); Ed Lopez, Washington Academy of Physician Assistants (pro); and Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association (pro).